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FATHER DIGNAM'S RETREATS

(FATHER AUGUSTUS DIGNAM, S.J.)

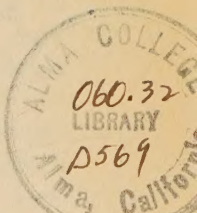
WITH LETTERS AND NOTES OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND A FEW CONFERENCES AND SERMONS

(FOURTH EDITION)

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN, S.J.



The love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself—a lover of Jesus and of truth

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FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN'S INTRODUCTION

To love God with one's whole heart was the chief commandment of the Old as it is of the New Dispensation. But for us who live under the present Law, the observance of the love-precept is altogether incomparably easier than it was for the men of old. Before "the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us," God seemed to be so inaccessibly far off—a star clearly seen, but hardly felt. Now all this is changed. God Incarnate has not only shared with us His treasures, but He has laid down for us His life, and given Himself to us to be our daily Food. His delight is to be with us, and He wants us all the time to be with Him. He has given His Heart to us that we may offer ours to Him. He does not merely invite, but He commands us, under penalties, to return to Him what He has lent to us—love stronger than death itself. His cry everywhere seems to be, "Give Me thy heart," "Abide in My love."

Our madness is that we are not madly in love with Him. To know Him as much as we say and to love Him as little as we do is a story over which angels might weep; and yet we have it on the highest authority that from very many persons who are most indebted to Jesus Christ, He receives little more than indifference, coldness, neglect. It is a terrible indictment against those who have been

almost petted and spoiled in the very sanctuary of the Church.

How wonderful is the patience of Christ! If you want to know something more about it read the life of St. Margaret Mary and meditate on the revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to this gentle, holy nun. To this devotée our Lord unfolded the love-story of His Sacred Heart, and no one can even peruse it without tears of sympathy for Him Whose thirst for souls we alone can slake.

Among the many holy religious who have responded with zeal to our Lord's pressing invitation to return love for love, and to follow the pleading of His Heart, Father Dignam is an outstanding figure. To the Sacred Heart he offered whole-hearted service, giving adoration, reparation and propagation. By word and work he propagated not merely devotion with atonement to the Sacred Heart. He was one of those who had the wisdom to recognise that there could be no true apostle's devotion to the Heart of Jesus without a missioner's zeal everywhere to preach Its interests. Father Dignam's pen was like a torch carrying love-light to all those whose privilege it was to live under his fatherly guidance. He, too, learned from our Lord that sweet patience and charity which endeared him so much to his spiritual children. In *Retreats* and other writings I find nothing very original or brilliant or literary, but they enshrine the peace and patience of Christ, and they reveal a measure of practical common sense not always the characteristic of spiritual conferences.

Father Dignam was always a delicate man, and his incessant correspondence must have cost him

a great deal of painstaking labour. I venture to think that God blesses our work in the measure in which we take pains over it. Anyhow, slipshod work can never appeal to Him "Who did all things well." Father Dignam certainly learned the art of taking pains. He, too, passed on to his spiritual children his own clinging and child-like love of our dear Lady. He felt that as Jesus came through her to us, so we had best go by her to Him. He knew that we could not love the Mother too much, provided we loved her Son much more. Another thing, too, I notice in Father Dignam's advice to souls seeking perfection in religion, and that is to keep up the first fervour of novice days. The secret of buoyant happiness in old age is whole-hearted enthusiasm for Christ. The noviciate is the spring-time of religious life. As the earth would die of cold if there were no return of Spring, so a religious would starve to death if the spring-time of his noviceship did not recur. God has little use for cold storage religious.

I feel Father Dignam would agree with me when I say that a postulant must be like a dab of clay by the potter's side waiting for the Sacred Hand to form and fashion it on the wheel of destiny after the Divine Craftsman's pattern. Accordingly the one concern of a novice must be never to resist, but always to yield to the fine pressure of the Master's touch. I take it that Father Dignam was the dab of clay I refer to, and he in the noviciate on the potter's wheel was shaped into the vessel of election, which later in life carried the flame of the Heart of Jesus to his ever-growing family of spiritual children. For many years the Father lived in an obscure

industrial town in Lancashire. But God knew where to find him. With God it does not so much matter where we are as what we are. It is easy enough to keep wide awake on Tabor, but difficult not to fall asleep in Gethsemane. But no matter where we are, in shadow or sunshine, let us be alive and alert to the Master's will, ready always to run His errands without pausing to count the wounds or reckon the cost. We must make it clear to Superiors that we are ready to do any work, no matter how distasteful or even menial it may be, provided the voice of obedience calls upon us to do it. When done for God's sake folding napkins or washing dishes may be worthier of our Lord's blessing than writing Conferences or introductions to them. He knows what intensity of love we put into our work. It is that which matters.

Need I say that in the Foundress[1] of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, Father Dignam found a client who was his ideal of a religious vowed to the service of God, her Divine Spouse and Lord?

May the Conferences, to which these feeble words are a further introduction, draw many a soul from the hem of our Lord's garment to the fire of His Heart. May there rise up night and day the cry—

O Heart on fire with love of me,
Inflame my heart with love of Thee.

BERNARD VAUGHAN, S.J.

Farm Street,
Feast of St. Gregory,
1921.

[1] Mother Magdalen Taylor, editor of Father Dignam's works.

PREFACE.

THE Very Reverend Father General of the Society of Jesus, in his letter to the writer of *Father Dignam's Memoir*, says: "In this Memoir the good he did in his life will be perpetuated and extended. A special fragrance hangs round his memory." One, perhaps the chief, element of this special fragrance, all who knew the Father will agree, was his special devotion to the Sacred Heart, ever pleading for us, and, above all, his continual labour to make that Heart and Its pleading known and loved. His continual labour—just as honey is the sweet and fragrant product of the *manifold toil* of the hive.

The beautifully organized labour of the bee, most busy among the great and little creatures of God, has in all times attracted the mind of man, himself a toiler; and it calls forth praise from the mouth of the Church, when, after toiling through the penitential season of Lent, she, full of song, sets up the light of triumphant joy in her sanctuaries at Eastertide; and again, when she celebrates the martyrdom of St. Cecily, and sings of her: "Busy like a bee, thou didst serve the Lord." With this image in the mind, we shall, perhaps, more fully relish the samples of Father Dignam's Retreats and

Conferences offered to us in this volume, which, it will be found, will serve as a kind of window in the hive of his days and years, that through it, we may see how busy he was, on what kind of work, and how the honey, which he was continually gathering for the nourishment of others, was also the daily food of his own soul. This last we shall be the better able to see, in that we have already been given the Memoir of his life, and have admired in it the abundant store of his virtues and good works, as the rich product in himself of that hidden labour of the hive, prayer and meditation, examples of which we are now about to examine in this book.

The Memoir alone, or the Retreats and Conferences alone, would not have sufficed. But, together, they enable us to discern how the path of the Father's daily life led up to the chair or pulpit from which he taught, and from them ascended again ever to higher things. I shall be forgiven, I feel sure, if I add my own testimony in this matter to that of the Memoir. Not that I have any but a few little facts to relate; but they are facts whose meaning and value are raised out of the common by this: that they took place in the first weeks of his last illness, in the critical time when God seems to put the soul and its virtue to the final test, in which it is proved, in the sight of men as well as of angels, whether or not the harmony between a man's preaching and his practice has been the real and genuine result of an ever-growing love of God.

When in the evening of the day that suddenly summoned me home to take the reins out of his

failing hands, I saw him, and saw what a wreck he was of his former self, and instinct led me not to ask him for any instructions or direction, but simply to say: "You need have no anxiety, Father; I shall do all the work until you get well," his face lit up and he said slowly, and most fervently, "Thank God." The tone of it was unmistakable: it did not matter what was to become of him, or what he suffered, so long as the work of the Sacred Heart was not neglected. This spirit of self-effacement appeared more clearly still next day, when I begged him to let me recommend him in the *Messenger* to the prayers of the Associates. "No, Father, no," he said, "in this work, we have to efface ourselves." He meant it, and was earnest and sincere about it. Sincerity had always been a great word with him, and in many places in his writings it may be found suddenly appearing like a warning finger: "But let us be sincere."

So therefore, in those sad days when the truth was being forced upon him that his work was over, he was throughout quietly business-like in putting himself aside, and in submitting to the melancholy process of being "shelved."

No cloud was seen on his face when he handed over one thing after another to his successor. The Cross was there, but no one could see even the shadow of it. So thoroughly did he then efface himself, that, when a few months after he was no longer, even nominally, the Central Director of the Apostleship, there was no need for any further relinquishing of authority or powers which he had

already voluntarily ceased to wield. That this was not mere apathy due to illness was clear enough, when, as was often the case, he had to be consulted. His interest then was as keen as ever, and his opinions as decided, and as strongly expressed. But there was a wonderful and childlike resignation of himself into the hands of others, which, again, was clearly not weakness, but an easy self-control, the fruit, no doubt, of many years of persevering growth in the unselfish love of God.

A quality that often clearly showed itself when he spoke about the work of the League, was his great and abiding gratitude to its Local Directors and Promoters, and to all who, in any sense, could be called its benefactors. There was evidence enough among his papers of the thoughtful care with which he was in the habit of writing to them, either to answer their questions, or to encourage or direct them. No pains seemed to him too great, no opportunity or means too trivial, if only he could secure some increase of devotedness in the Promoters and Associates.

That his model in this was the Sacred Heart Itself appeared from a little incidental remark of his a few days before leaving Wimbledon. He said that one ought not to be puzzled by the mass of temporal favours asked for and obtained by members of the League, nor hastily conclude that the pure love of God was kept somewhat out of sight. These favours were our Lord's way of attracting numberless souls to His Heart, for they were a proof of Its unspeakable tenderness.

To adapt a Scripture phrase which, unhappily, in the first instance refers only to poor sinful Absalom, Father Dignam seemed to look upon the Divine Heart of the God-Man as very human in Its dealings with us, and as ever "*enticing the hearts*" of men: —*solicitabat corda.*[1]

The phrase—I once heard it used by Father Dignam in another connection, and that is why it occurs to me—leads us to the parting words the Father spoke to me before leaving Wimbledon. He was waiting for the cab which was to take him away, and as we were for a few moments left alone, he suddenly seemed to desire to implant in my mind a germ, in a few pregnant words, of the great tree of which he himself had watched the growth, and gathered the fruit so long.

"The idea of the Sacred Heart pleading for us," he said, "is a *great revelation*, and it has to be made known." I answered that surely it had been made known, and very widely, already. "Only to a handful," he said, "in comparison to all who might know it, and ought to know it, if one could only get them to listen."

Here again was the *solicitabat corda*. He would *entice the hearts of all*. He spoke sadly, as if he had succeeded in helping to win only a very few. And yet, he seemed to say, the Idea, the Revelation, was so great, so beautiful, the wonder is that it had not long since captivated every Catholic heart.

Well, in the Retreats and Conferences given to us in this book, we can see how he strove directly or

[1] 2 Kings xv 6.

indirectly to draw hearts to the knowledge of this Revelation; and whether those who heard him were young or old, whether priests, or religious, or laymen, whether they came under the influence of his words alone, or gathered together in numbers, the attraction, secret or open, was ever to the same Centre, the Sacred Heart. Indeed, it may not be unfair to say, that if the sense of this attraction manifest or hidden, were not there, these Meditations and Conferences would be robbed of a great part of their force, and that the special fragrance to which the Father General bears testimony, would lose much of its sweetness, and, perhaps, altogether vanish.

May this book, then, of his Retreats and Conferences fulfil his burning desire, and itself be a powerful allurement to the hearts of many, drawing them, as it surely will, to a greater knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart ever interceding for us! May it be to many what the drop of honey in the weary march[1] was to Jonathan, an enlightening of the eyes, that they may fully realize what it is to be loved by the Sacred Heart, what it is to love It, and what it is to labour for It! May it fill the breasts of all that read it with the fire which burnt in the heart of him whose words it enshrines! and may their whole life, with all its prayers and labours and sufferings, thereby become more and more like his, one prolonged, uninterrupted aspiration: "Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest, Thou art not loved, O would that Thou wert loved!"

[1] 1 Kings xiv. 27.

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Letter from His Eminence Cardinal Mazzella, S.J., Cardinal Protector of the Institute, to the Mother General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.

ROME, *15th December*, 1895.

REVEREND MOTHER GENERAL,

Yesterday I had the honour and pleasure of presenting to the Holy Father the Life of the much-regretted Father Dignam, S.J. Having previously read it, I could thus tell him that it describes to us a man who was all intent on propagating the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in England, and the great co-operator in the firm foundation of the much-esteemed Institute of the Povere Ancelle della Madre di Dio e dei Poveri (Poor Servants of the Mother of God and the Poor), and, therefore, a lover and benefactor of theirs. Such a book cannot fail to give edification to the faithful, and, above all, to the said Povere Ancelle, who will find in it the spirit of their holy Institute perfectly described. All this led the Holy Father to accept with pleasure the filial offering, and to impart to you, and to your Institute, the Apostolical Benediction. Nothing more remains to me, but to hope that the blessing of the Holy Father may cause this book to bear more and more salutary fruit.

Reverend Mother General,

Most affectionately at your service,

C. CARDINAL MAZZELLA, Protector.

Letter from His Paternity the Very Reverend Father General of the Society of Jesus.

ROME, *7th October*, 1895.

DEAR REVEREND MOTHER GENERAL,

I beg to return sincere thanks for the edifying *Memoir of Father Augustus Dignam*. The good that his words did to individuals in his lifetime will be perpetuated and extended to others, by the numerous extracts from his letters now published in this *Memoir*. But who can estimate the spiritual help he gave to countless souls by his fervent instructions, counsels, exhortations, continued for so many years in the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart?* He was truly an Apostle of the Sacred Heart, and so his work in life was visibly blessed, and a special fragrance hangs round his memory after death.

May our Divine Lord impart to us something of the same fervour and zeal, in spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Believe me, dear Reverend Mother General,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

L. MARTIN, S.J.

Reverend Mother General M. Magdalen,
The Convent, The Butts, Brentford, London.*

* *Memoir of Father Dignam, S.J.* London: Burns and Oates.

INTRODUCTION.

It has afforded no small consolation to those concerned in the compilation of *Father Dignam's Memoir, Retreats* and *Conferences*, that these works have not only been appreciated by many, but that they have proved to be of spiritual assistance to various persons, both to Religious and to others.[1]

The fact that a second edition of *Retreats*, has become necessary confirms this assurance. Nothing surely would have given more joy (and we trust does now give it) to Father Dignam's heart, than to find that the records of his life, and of the words he said or wrote, should serve to continue his work for souls; it is hoped that this new edition may also aid to perpetuate those labours of his. For it has been beautifully said, "that with unwearied energy he toiled to his last gasp in the work of forming spiritual men and women."

Few things could have given him more consolation than the following letter from a Father of the venerable Order of St. Benedict, concerning the *Memoir*. "I usually find printed letters rather hard reading; they skip so from subject to subject. A thought may be expressed in a striking way, it does

[1] See Appendix.

not seem to have time to get in. I must, however, make an exception to the letters of the good Father. There is such a unity of spirit, and such a straightforward simplicity in them, that I found them very profitable reading. My favourite is the one, 'To a Nun' (pp. 214—216). One sees the clearness of insight, and the whole-heartedness of Father Dignam in that letter. It is to me a real treasure in itself. I cannot say how often I have read it over. If I could say that I had thoroughly learnt the lesson, I should be saying that I was ready for Heaven." May it, therefore, be that in Father Dignam shall be verified God's own promise: "*My elect shall not labour in vain.*" "*He shall see a long-lived seed,*" and as in his life "*he brought forth fruit, that fruit shall remain.*"

Naturally, the Memoir has evoked many a reminiscence of Father Dignam. One speaks of the delight the boys at Beaumont used to take in the Conferences which he gave every week to them during the year that he was Spiritual Father at Beaumont. How they looked forward to the day, clustered round him as he spoke, and found his exhortations all too short. There is a touching little story connected with Beaumont.

There are incidents in life, which, though slight, are at times so woven together, that their recital tends to quicken our faith and love for our Divine Lord.

A mother, pondering the future of her unborn child, dedicated it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, signing her act of consecration, June 1st. After the

birth of her son, she, together with her husband, renewed this act in a very solemn way.

When Father Dignam was Spiritual Father at Beaumont, this son was finishing his education there, and, by the Father's care and direction, was led to join the Society of Jesus. The Father urged him not to wait till September, the usual time for novices to enter, but to go at once; and thus, ignorant of his mother's consecration of him, and by a mere accident, he entered the Novitiate on June 1st, and made his vows two years afterwards on the same date.

And it so befell that, twenty years later, it was into the hands of this Father, thus consecrated before his birth, and thus led by him to the Society, that Father Dignam in the course of obedience resigned the most beloved work of his life—the direction of the Apostleship and *Messenger of the Sacred Heart.*

The mother who had offered to the Sacred Heart her child before giving it birth, was, like her husband, a very fervent Catholic.

They were friends of Father Dignam, and were living at Boulogne at the time he was stationed there. She was a fervent Promoter of the Apostleship long before it was revived in England. She was, indeed, a heroic soul, all aflame with the love of the Sacred Heart. *Thy Kingdom come* was ever on her lips.

She held Father Dignam in high esteem as a truly apostolic man, remarking: "What a director we have in Father Dignam!" and she used to compare him to Père Ramière, whom she knew very well. She was one of those souls in whom Father Dignam must have taken great delight, as she truly

carried out his advice to forget ourselves for God's interests. When her Jesuit son came to her on her death-bed, she feared he had been called away from a convent retreat for her sake, and exclaimed, with her failing breath, that he was not to think of her—but "go back and finish the retreat."

Another Benedictine Father thus writes: "It is twenty years ago since our well-remembered Retreat at R—— by Father Dignam. I am sorry not to have any notes of it at this time. It stands out in a singular way among the many Retreats I have had in my lifetime. We had been sorely tried; we all felt as if Father Dignam had been sent from Heaven. I remember speaking to him of a Retreat I had heard given at Subiaco by Father Minini, S.J., and his saying, in his quiet, half-joking way, that it discouraged him to know we had heard such great masters. He himself had the art of letting people know their failings clearly, without leaving any soreness behind. He was wonderfully kind, and I can even now remember the tone of his voice when (after I had rendered a slight service to one of his brethren) he said, 'Oh, what a kind thoughtful creature you are!' Individually I owe him *very very* much."

The late sacristan of Holy Cross Church, St. Helens, often spoke of the edification Father Dignam had given. His thanksgivings after Mass were always long, and marked with deep recollection. The sacristan would frequently find the altar-boys making a noise, and people would enter the sacristy on business; but Father Dignam would be kneeling

immovable like a statue, quite unconscious of what was passing around him—lost in prayer.[1]

It has been thought by some, that in the Memoir enough stress was not laid on Father Dignam's knowledge and love of the *Imitation*. It was, however, supposed that this would speak for itself in his letters. In a certain sense Father Dignam may have been said to be a "man of one book," though, of course, Holy Scripture, which he loved so exceedingly, and the Spiritual Exercises, came before the *Imitation*. But he seemed to know this latter book by heart, and so to bring it into play that it threw a fresh light upon every phase of the spiritual life. In the Retreats given to the Poor Servants of the Mother of God (and probably elsewhere), he always chose chapters of the *Imitation* to be read by the Sisters in free time: and his choice alone had such a significance, that it formed a valuable instruction in the knowledge of this wonderful book. He had two favourite quotations from the *Imitation*. The first, *nudus nudum sequar*, which tells us how the soul, stripped of all self-love, *naked follows the naked one*. This, which is the highest summit of perfection, was the object of his desire, after which he was ever struggling and aiming. The other motto exactly describes what he *was*. *The love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself, a lover of Jesus and of truth*. Even in his great humility, though he would have denied that he was

[1] Mr. Williams, the devoted sacristan of Holy Cross for about thirty years, venerated Father Dignam. He died on the first anniversary of the Father's death, 26th September, 1895, apparently consoled by the invisible presence of the director he had so valued.

detached from, and stripped of all things, he must have owned he loved Jesus and he loved truth. It has also been remarked that enough has not been said of his love of truth. With him all policy and double-dealing could not live; if not cured by his teaching, the offender shrank back from him.

"Was he not," writes one, "like the great Archangel in Doré's splendid picture of St. Michael's battle with Lucifer, when the artist makes you *feel* the difference between truth and falsehood? His face when he looked at the Tabernacle, and his voice teaching us to be *true* in all things, reminded me often of that angelic form leaning on his sword, looking up to Heaven, giving all glory of the victory over the prostrate foe to the Most High, and saying *Who is like unto God?* So did the Father constantly teach us that God is all, we are nothing; let us be *true*—humility is *truth*."

His spirit of gratitude was deep indeed; he was permeated by it. Never did he forget to thank for the smallest service rendered him; and how intense was his gratitude to God! Never can the writer forget an occasion on which he said, lifting his eyes to Heaven: "Oh, my child, *how* can we thank God enough for our vocation? Never, never can we do it enough." The words, the gesture, the glowing look taught more than a sermon could.

It has been often eagerly asked if Father Dignam ever committed to paper any records of the inward workings of his own soul, such as has been frequently done by holy people, and of which there is a notable instance in the case of Père Olivaint, S.J., of glorious

memory. How many hearts have been strengthened and guided by the revelations of *his* soul can never be counted.

If Father Dignam followed this course he must have destroyed all his papers; and only by an accident a few fragments remain, which give us a glimpse of his inner life.

They must, of course, be read in the same manner in which we study the outpourings of Père Olivaint and others, who could see no good in themselves where others perceived heroic virtue, and nothing but evil in themselves where others could perceive none. So Father Dignam, who was indeed meek and humble of heart, and overflowing with the deepest contrition, writes in the early days of his religious life during a Retreat: "I had given up perfection. Oh! since I last made this meditation (on religious life), how unfaithful I have been to its lights and lessons; but especially since the last great crowning grace, the vows. Though never owned, perhaps, in words, the work was abandoned. My Jesus, how patient, how merciful art Thou! I will never cease, by Thy grace, to seek to make myself more pleasing to Thee. The two great infidelities have been (1) the tongue, (2) bodily self-denial. I have yielded to the old folly; nicknames, raillery, and perpetual nonsense have driven spirituality away, a work which a quiet deliberate search after every possible ease and comfort of body has completed, and I have been *thoroughly tepid*. Mental prayer has been almost lost, because I never could feel that I was aiming at perfection."

At another time, after he had made a meditation on the joys of eternity, which he owns was "good, with devotion," he says, "I renewed my good resolution that the future may let me settle into a holy Religious. Hitherto, I have been driven about by every wind; deceived by my own vanity, and nearly wrecked. Now, I am to begin. Shall I abandon perfection in the Society? Shall I think my position incompatible with it? Shall I give up at my failures? I am still in the same house with Jesus Christ; He will not refuse to help and preserve me. Through Him in the Blessed Sacrament I must attain perfection. But not devotion for *others* to *admire*, but for Him alone to know of. Every Sunday morning, at first coming to my room I will make ten minutes' reflection, keeping before me my especial object,—the cure of the tongue, selfishness, bodily ease."

The second fragment which remains to us thus runs: "O blessed, O happy vocation, to live the life of Jesus Christ upon earth, to fulfil most perfectly the end of man, to enjoy the highest place in His love, and happiness in Heaven! May all the miseries and torments of this world be inflicted on me, rather than ever to cease to love Thee more and more dearly, rather than ever cease to hold this the most precious grace that can be given to me—to die a true and worthy child of St. Ignatius! You, dearest Mother, did not bring me here without sincerely desiring and intending to grant me the grace of true devotion, though I have hitherto prevented you. Now, I declare that I will try unceasingly to

co-operate with you, by conquering myself. Gentleness, charity."[1]

These resolutions were kept surely, for were not the distinguishing virtues of his life gentleness and charity? The gentleness of a mother was his. On one occasion, when the remark was made to him that he was treating a very unrepentant culprit with too much kindness, he replied with a look of indescribable sweetness, "Ah! you don't understand what a priest's heart is." To those in trouble, sorrow, or repentance it was impossible to express his gentleness. In compiling the *Memoir* and the other volumes, a very large number of Father Dignam's letters have been perused; many of them written with the utmost unreserve and confidence; and yet not one word against charity has ever been found amongst them. The faults of others are seldom spoken of, and never without regret, excuses, and tenderness; and so it was with his conversation. *The law of clemency was on his tongue.* When faults were mentioned it always seemed to give him sorrow: for God who was offended, and for the person who had failed. His tone of voice in speaking of others taught deep lessons to those who hung upon his words, and formed in them habits of charity.

He was always most reticent about himself; though willing enough to speak of his faults and blunders at times, he always shrank from any sort of praise or admiration. It is therefore surprising to find a certain description of his own feelings, given in a

[1] Later on a few more fragments of this description were found. —*Conferences*, pp. xix—xxviii.

conference to nuns, in February, 1888, just after he had returned from making his Retreat at St. Beuno's.

The object of this conference was self-abnegation; and he began by saying: "I suppose you know I am just out of Retreat, and I am going to speak to you simply, as I always do, about what occurred to my mind during it. Before I made my Retreat this year, I read a letter of a Jesuit to another Jesuit, in which he commented on the excellence of the Spiritual Exercises. He concluded by saying that he considered any Religious, receiving such a spiritual training as that conveyed by the Exercises, was in great danger, if with such spiritual knowledge he had not the virtue of abnegation. The fact of being looked upon as a spiritual person might make him presume that he was such; while, in reality, his interior life might not at all correspond to his spiritual enlightenment; and he who bestowed so abundantly upon others out of his spiritual store, might be himself a Religious only in name." The Father then pointed out, that the habit and state of life do not make the Religious, and that only by self-denial can we truly follow Jesus, who says: *Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me;* "and this thought," he says, "ran all through my eight days' Retreat like one chord constantly repeated in music, each meditation repeated it; in fact, it came up so clearly, that all else seemed to vanish."

After some further instruction to the nuns, giving a rapid *résumé* of the lesson of self-denial inculcated in each of the meditations, he then went on to say: "Thus, all through the eight days' Retreat, in my

solitude the Holy Spirit instilled into my mind the truths I impart to you;" and at the close of the conference, he said, "Such are the lessons which I would convey to you; but they must come to you with much less force than they did to me, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, who showed me these truths in so clear a light during my Retreat."

This revelation of himself is so unlike him, that we can only suppose in this Retreat he must have received special graces from God, of which he was, as it were, compelled to speak to those he trusted, and that, from this time forward, he was lifted to a higher phase of sanctity.

Readers of the *Memoir* will perhaps recollect a passage (p. 416). One of Father Dignam's spiritual children writes: "I cannot quite remember the exact time, but I think it could not have been later than 1889, that I perceived a great change in Father Dignam. He was becoming more supernatural." She thought he had attained a higher phase of sanctity,—had become, as we say, a saint.

Certainly, as the years passed on, his self-denial grew and increased. He was, as all weak persons are, greatly dependent on sleep, and had hitherto enjoyed that great blessing. But now the hours of sleep were often sacrificed that he might finish some pressing work; and over-work and over-anxiety constantly made him sleepless; in which case he would rise and go back to his desk. He could not bear the Apostleship business to be in arrears, and it was a real pain to him to leave letters of direction so long unanswered. He once said, that he had such deep

untold happiness, in having been chosen to promote the work. And that it was wonderful he should keep so well, leaving his room only once in the week to go out. His *one* sorrow was that so many—priests especially—could not see the beauty and value of the work.

Those who loved him now wonder at the blindness which prevented them from perceiving that with him the sword had worn out the sheath, and that the silver cord would soon be broken, and the golden fillet shrink away. It was the feeling that life without him was so impossible that closed their eyes to the truth. The unselfish desire to help others caused him to long to live.

He knew well how many hearts were saying to him the words addressed to St. Martin by his disciples: "Father, why wilt thou go away from us? unto whom wilt thou bequeath us in o r sorrow?" and he willingly prayed: "Lord, if I be still needful to Thy people, I refuse not to work." He was always fond of this prayer of St. Martin, and had exhorted more than one Religious to use it when on a sick-bed.

When our Lord was in His Agony, He asked that the Chalice might be removed from Him. The trial that seemed almost beyond the strength of the dear Father was the deprivation of his Mass. In his perfect resignation he, too, would ask that *this* cup might pass from him! "I am so discouraged," he said, to one of his religious brethren, "because I cannot say Mass." This was after his severe fainting-fit in March, 1894.

His tender Master did allow this trial to be removed until he was actually called to pass into the valley of the shadow of death.

One who was present when Father Dignam was taken ill at the altar in August, 1890, relates that he broke down at the Gospel, and went into the sacristy, where he fainted. When the doctor tried to get some brandy between his lips, he resisted, murmuring, "My Mass! I have not said my Mass!" Father Dignam once said, "Mass is my life—without Mass I must die"[1]—it is well to record that he was one of those on whom Mass has a *physical* effect, as well as spiritual. He went to his Mass in utter feebleness—he returned with new strength. But he loved the Will of God better even than his Mass. On his lips was ever the wonderful prayer of St. Ignatius: *Sume et suscipe.*

When he was once asked, in his closing days, how he felt, he replied, "Very poorly, indeed;" but with a smile, "I don't forget my *Sume et suscipe.*"

He had made this prayer and this offering so constantly through life, and God had taken him at his word. All that he could offer had been accepted; and the all generous Master had, in return, given him His love and grace in abundance in life, and has now given these gifts to him in fullest measure, "pressed down and running over," in the Kingdom of his Father.

[1] *Memoir*, p. 360.

Section 1.

N.B.—These notes of Retreat were taken down as the words fell from Father Dignam's lips, or immediately after he had spoken. They were in no way revised by him; but they faithfully render his thoughts and ideas, and in many cases his actual words. Still, great inequality of style and length must be naturally expected. They were not all taken down consecutively, or by the same person, and in few cases is the whole of the meditation given. The points which made the most impression upon the hearers were retained before others. Though the great desire of the compilers has been to render this volume useful to those who wish to make private Retreats, no attempt has been made to add preludes or colloquy, which in many cases were not given by the Father at all, or, except in rare instances, were not recorded. It must be clearly understood that these meditations will be almost useless to those who are not well acquainted with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius; and it will be necessary for readers of them to have a copy of the Exercises as well as of the Holy Gospels in their hands. The Edition of the Exercises used for reference in this book is the translation edited by the late Father Morris, S.J.[1] The primary intention of the present volume has been to provide matter for the use chiefly of Religious who wish to make private Retreats. The second, to give more of Father Dignam's letters and notes of direction than have already appeared. It was hoped that space could have been found for all the material in the compiler's hands, but this has proved impossible; and only a choice could be made amidst an *embarras des richesses*. It is earnestly desired that an opportunity may occur of making use of what remains in the compiler's hands at a later period.[2]

[1] London: Burns and Oates.

[2] This has now been done in *Conferences*, and in the present enlarged edition.

RETREATS.

First Retreat.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

How to make our Retreat.

1. THE spiritual exercises of a Retreat are likened by St. Ignatius to the exercises of the body in *taking a walk*, in *making a journey*, or in *running;* and we should see which is to be our way in making our Retreat.

Those who *take a walk* generally go along familiar paths, and soon return whence they came.

Let us look into our past lives, and see whether we are only going round and round to the same point, like a cat after its tail.

Those who *go on a journey* have an end in view, and all their efforts are to attain this end, without thinking of their return, or letting trifles turn them aside.

Those *who run* are those who go with speed on their way.

Which of them is to be our way in the Retreat?

2. We should propose to ourselves to learn the truth about ourselves, that we may clear our hearts of disorderly affections, and so be able to see the

will of God in our regard. In full a hundred places in Scripture, God's love for those who love the truth is referred to. Even many Religious do not care to see the truth; but hug their delusions with affection, though perhaps unconsciously.

By "disorderly affections" is meant inclinations not founded on clear reason or on faith. If we are in joy, or if we are in sadness, let us ask ourselves the cause of it; and if our conscience can give no satisfactory answer, we may conclude the feeling is disorderly.

3. Three dispositions are very necessary for the Retreat—a good-will to be alone with God, abandonment to God's will, and patience with dry truths. We must not be troubled at having by obedience to attend to any charge or work; obedience will make it all safe and good for us. The *ten additions* should be carefully attended to, and the particular examination *made* on them and *marked*.

Any one doing this faithfully during the Retreat may look up to God and say, "I have done my best." Prayer is not so much wanted in the Retreat as *consideration*—if we are deeply impressed with the truths, our prayers will be better all through the year.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On our Last End.

1. "Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul."

Our creation means that we are breathed forth from God, to return to Him again. He places us at a little distance from Him, as a mother does with her child, to see what it will do.

We were created to *praise*. The praise which is an aromatic fragrance to God is our *liking* His service. It is an error to suppose we cannot like what we choose. Our likings are with God's grace under the control of our will. We came into Religion on purpose to control our likings, in order to like obedience, poverty, work.

The true picture of a tepid Religious is, that she has left off liking her life and its duties—she goes back to the husks of the swine, leaving the pearls by her side, just as swine would do.

2. David was a man "according to God's own Heart," because of his spirit of praise. He preserved this spirit in spite of his great sins, his deep contrition, and loss of temporal prosperity. We can have this spirit, if we ask for and earnestly desire it.

It is a most precious gift, so pleasing to God, so greatly influencing our whole lives, making hard things easy, turning away our minds from petty vexations, and rendering our service of God a joyful one, and therefore most acceptable to Him.

3. Praise is the creature's answer to the beauty and kindness of the Creator. Our relations with God as His creatures, are the nearest and dearest and sweetest claims to the mercy of Him who knoweth the frailty of those whom He has made.

CONSIDERATION.

The Particular Examination.

The particular examination is an exercise, the true nature of which is very generally misunderstood.

When rightly understood and sincerely and perseveringly practised, it is nothing less than an efficacious means of perfection; but it is painful to nature—so painful that not a few take refuge in austerities and contemplation, rather than endure the slow crucifixion of the interior man which the particular examination entails. Not unfrequently, also, men delude themselves into believing that liberty of spirit is restrained by its constant repetition, and cease to persevere.

The particular examination is a concentrated struggle of the will—not with all our faults equally, but with one specially chosen as the most important to be overcome. It perfects the will by renewing the concentrated resolution in the morning, at noon, and night; puts it in practice by vigilance, scrutiny, humiliation, and sorrow. It uses no violence; but patience with failure, longanimity in effort, constancy in renewal of purpose,—these are its means to victory, a victory, however, which in this world will never be fully attained.

Those called to the active service of their neighbour, who may expect frequent changes of Superiors, who may be changed from place to place, from charge to charge, who are surrounded by many occasions of sin, and, while living in the world, are not of the world—these must aspire to solid virtues,

rooted in the understanding and in the heart by habits of self-knowledge and self-conquest, acquired by the particular examination or some similar exercise.

It consists of two parts, the matter and the form. The matter is the fault selected for attack, or the virtue of which a habit is to be acquired: and the aid of a wise counsellor is often necessary for its choice. The form is the practice of the exercise three times a day. Of these three times the first is at rising, when the resolution to watch and struggle against the fault chosen should be renewed *for the coming morning;* the second is at noon, when the conscience is examined in order to find how often the fault has been committed, and the number noted in the book, the due acts of self-humiliation, contrition, hope, and the renewal of our resolution *for the rest of that day* are made; the third is before retiring to rest, when the exercise as made at noon is repeated.

For the matter, always choose some outward defect first; and then, when these are all conquered, proceed to the higher walks of spirituality. It stands to reason that by concentrating our efforts against one particular defect, we must in the end conquer it.

There are two temptations to be guarded against in this—the first is that the devil, when he sees we are in earnest on any one point, will remove all the temptations to that fault out of our way; and so when we come to find we have no faults to note down for some days, then we give up and think we have conquered; as soon as we do that, Satan puts

on full steam, and we fall fifty times in the day, and so give up in despair.

The second is that when we are really striving in earnest, and constantly fall, and constantly make our act of sorrow and renew our resolution, the devil will whisper that we cannot be in earnest or we should not fall so often, so we had better give it up than act the hypocrite. These humiliations, though slight, of our constant falls, so keenly felt, bring us nearer to our Lord, and make us dearer to Him than if we never fell; and to persevere in spite of them is solid sanctity.

Père de Ravignan, a man steeped in spirituality, says he would consider as a most excellent fruit of a good Retreat the particular examination made carefully during the next year.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On our Last End (continued).

1. We were created to reverence. Any other spirit in a creature is simply ridiculous. What is the attitude of our minds towards God?

We can discover this by the habitual tendency of our thoughts, more than by our words and actions.

To brood over our sufferings is poison to the soul—so also is pondering over the faults of others.

The best thoughts to keep our souls in peace are of God's mercies to us, which give us joy, and of our sins to keep us humble.

Peace is the field in which all virtues play. We cannot be too fastidious about the food of our souls.

2. Reverence, or holy fear, is very different from servile fear. It is the deep self-annihilation of the creature before the Creator. Reverence is the creature's answer to the immense sanctity and justice of the Creator.

3. We ought to pray for great things,—such as wisdom, and the spirit of praise and reverence.

How can we tell if we are wanting in wisdom?

By the following signs:

1. If we are always proving ourselves in the right.

2. If we judge rashly in thought.

3. If we attach ourselves to trifles.

4. If we are always quoting others in support of our own opinions, especially the words of priests.

5. If we have an abrupt manner.

6. If we are full of self-excuses.

7. If we choose for ourselves.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Creatures and Indifference.

1. "And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and in order to aid him in the prosecution of the end for which he was created."

Creatures are the veil which hides God; they are good angels to help us, or evil ones to turn us away from God, according to the use we make of them; but He has too much respect for our free-will to interfere with us and force us.

Creatures are but *means*, not scattered broadcast, but picked out and chosen by God for each one of us.

There are material things and moral, some straight from God (and of these, humiliations are the most precious)—some from other people. Have we used all these in order to praise, reverence, and serve God only?

2. Our first impulse about creatures should be to renounce them, and to say, "You are not God."

A right use of creatures *is* our service of God.

We are pilgrims, and we must use creatures with the indifference of pilgrims.

Consider the example of the Archangel Raphael:

"For when I was with you I was there by the will of God."

We must never deliberate between good and evil, for this would be an insult to God.

We cannot deliberate on things already fixed. We can only choose between those that are indifferent in themselves. We cannot be indifferent to the creature *God has chosen for us*,—such as our vocation, for instance.

3. There are four great obstacles to this indifference to creatures:

A *perverted will*, which takes for its rules false maxims.

A *slothful will*, which postpones all good actions.

An *infirm will*, which cannot bear the thought of any trouble.

A *reserved will*, which will do *this* but not *that;* bear with one Superior, but not with another; endure a

reproof given sweetly, but not if bestowed in any other way.

Let us pray for and strive for true wisdom in indifference to creatures.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Sin.

1. The fallen angels would not abase themselves before God.

Their greatest gifts were turned to their greatest condemnation.

Adam and Eve used their judgment to disbelieve the word of God—*they tried to go as far as they could to evil.* They were deceived and blinded by the devil. Then they were covered with *false shame*—and thus do those act who try to hide themselves from God, and are unwilling to think of their sins before Him.

2. Perfect contrition is hindered because we feel the disgrace of sin. We are ashamed of our unworthiness, and we rest in thoughts of self instead of turning to God, and then comes discouragement and sadness.

St. Ignatius' method of obtaining contrition is to make us see what sin has done in us, and what it has done to our Lord.

3. Contrition is not an effort of the *heart*, but of the *will*.

Let us sit down by the polluted wells and see our sins in sad procession. What meanness there is even in the least of them! and then see how

generously and how nobly our Lord has borne with us, expecting this act of contrition that we are going to make.

CONSIDERATION.

On Meditation.

Begin your meditation by a real, good, earnest act of the presence of God. "O my God, my Sovereign Lord, who hast absolute dominion over me, Thy poor miserable creature—behold me here before Thee to adore Thee, to praise Thee, to reverence Thee. If Thou wert only to look on me for one minute, it would be infinitely more than I deserve, and yet Thou hast done so much for me and I have offended Thee so much by my sins; still Thou sufferest me in Thy presence, Thou knowest my weakness, my imbecility, my foolish distractions, and still Thou permittest me to sit at Thy feet."

Your volatility of mind can and must be conquered. If the book itself does not suggest a suitable idea, there are always the persons, words and actions. If the words do not help you, you can always sit down at our Lord's feet, take your crucifix in your hand, and tell Him how miserable you are; if you cannot even stay there, say: Jesus, help me; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, keep me in your presence. I am firmly convinced that the best kind of meditation is to sit at our Lord's feet, waiting for Him to speak to us—and, if He does not, asking Him to put something in our hearts to say to Him—but quite prepared to pass the time without His doing either the one or the other.

Make a good hearty act of good-will, and firm determination to spend that half-hour in the presence of God, and be sure God will *be pleased*, however imperfect and incapable you may be. It is Jansenism and pure pride which says: I am so bad, God cannot be pleased with me. God does not love us because we are good, but because He created us, called us out of nothing—created us for Himself, and He is foolish with love for His creature. The worst and most persevering badness cannot ever wear out the infinite, untiring love of the Sacred Heart.

As far as my own experience goes, the great means to acquire the spirit of prayer is: *Sileant omnes creaturæ.* Recollect yourself within yourself as a poor miserable atom of nothingness, and worse in the presence of the all Holy, Almighty, all Glorious Majesty of God. All good prayer comes out of this. Until we shut out all creatures—until we see ourselves as we really are—poor, miserable, blind, naked lunatics—God cannot take possession of us; and even when He does condescend to visit us, as soon as self comes in and says: "Ah! now I am praying well," it is all over; there is nothing left for us but to sit down in our misery and rags, and bear our own wretchedness peacefully till it pleases His Divine Majesty to visit us again.

Be alive to the importance of keeping the "great silence." The ten additions[1] contain in themselves the essence of the religious life.

From the time when you put away your last piece

[1] *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 28.

of work at night, till after Mass the next morning, every thought of worldly and natural interest must be banished. This is of so much importance that the devil is sure to try his utmost to prevent your forming the habit, but you *must* persevere, a bad habit can be replaced by a good one.

I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.

When you wake, recall the meditation, if it easily occupies you well; but if not, keep your thoughts for God—say some psalm, some prayer. If you let worldly thoughts and interests come in, how dare you say that you are *determined* to become a prayerful soul, as far as God will give you grace? You must call your *will* into action. If you wished very much for anything and knew you could get it by an act of self-control, you would be sure to do it.

When you have done your utmost and really cannot overcome your distractions, then turn them to good account. Take your crucifix in your hand and sit at our Lord's feet in silence like Mary Magdalen. How contented she would have been to sit there for half an hour, or an hour, even if He took not the slightest notice of her! It is far more than you deserve, to be allowed to show Him your homage by staying for half an hour or more in His presence.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Our own Sins.

1. Let us have pity on our own souls, and do not rashly expose them to the occasions of sin.

If you guard them you will then deserve the mercy of God. You must meet your sins at the bar of God's justice; so keep their memory green before you now, and wash them out with tears of compunction. Bear willingly and lovingly the shame of them; an act of contrition by God's mercy is enough to gain forgiveness of our sins, but not enough to blot them out from God's remembrance.

We must remember them that *God* may forget them. We go on in our sins because we do not try to discover their *root*. This would lead to self-knowledge, which, after all, is the real work of the spiritual life. David understood this and said, "From my hidden sins, O Lord, deliver me."

2. True shame is the willing acceptance of the disgrace we have brought on ourselves, which we accept, thanking God.

Then we turn to God and grieve over the offence, sure that we are forgiven, full of sorrow for the pain we have caused Him.

Motives of Shame.

1. We are but creatures.
2. Our want of correspondence with grace.
3. Our sins, and all they have cost our Lord to wash away.

Fruits of Shame.

1. The best disposition for Holy Communion.
2. It disposes us well for prayer and the Sacraments.
3. It renders us forbearing to others.

4. It is a preventative against relapse into former sins, or the fall into fresh ones.

5. It makes us ready for humiliation and reproof.

Never forget past sins, and those habits wilfully indulged in which were sure to lead to sin.

Take those sins to the foot of the Cross, and let the stream of love from the precious Wounds whose source is in the Sacred Heart once more run over them, and never let yourself put off the garment of shame. Those who have made least progress are exactly those who have been most unwilling to put on this garment of shame. Self-abjection can only come from keeping green the memory of our sins, and it is the starting-point of the spiritual life.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Particular Judgment and Hell.

1. There are not two Jesus Christs. The same Jesus, so loving, so desirous of our salvation, will judge us. He will "search Jerusalem with lamps" that He may discover something to reward with His unerring judgment.

He will sift carefully all that has been *for self* from all that has been *against self*. He will separate the fibres with exquisite discernment, and He will be obliged to subtract whatever has been for self from the weight of glory He had been preparing for us. We shall reap as we have sown.

What the enemy has sown in the night of our darkness by passion or negligence will certainly crop up, and we shall taste its bitterness; but we can turn even the *creature* "cockle" to our profit by eating our bread of humiliation with patience, which will bring us back to God.

Those are nearest to God who are crying, *Lord, that I may see*, or with St. Austin, "Let me know myself, let me know Thee."

2. The pains of Hell—the devils, the horror, are only the accidents of its torments. The essence is the loss of God to those hearts created with such a capacity for enjoyment, and which He alone can fill; and with this fearful loss is the embrace of the creatures for which the soul is lost. Revenge—self-will—ambition and the like. This fact should make us dread the seduction of creatures which have such a terrible power of making us spurn the Creator.

Imagine having to dwell in that loathsome abode —with the loss of God—and embraced by the creature which the soul now hates, and thinking of the Passion which now is all in vain.

The Passion which is now our consolation, our healing, the object of our tenderest gratitude, will then become an endless source of unavailing regret and despair.

3. Hell shows us so clearly what living for self comes to.

We came from God and are made only for Him, and our interests are the same as those of God—to live for Him and then go to Him. All that favours

self is against God and against our own interests. He that does not "hate his own soul" shall lose it.

Let us gain this light from looking upon Hell—let us gain this deep conviction to aid us in time of temptation. Hell is the home of those who wilfully prefer self to God. To form an idea of what the loss of God would be, let us imagine our convent laid under an interdict—the Blessed Sacrament solemnly carried away, and we having to come in shame and humiliation into the chapel with the Tabernacle empty, and no Mass for us. What acute pain we should suffer! To good Religious the thought of Hell should ever remind them of the mercies of God. They should say to themselves, "I might have been there, but God has prevented me."

SECOND MEDITATION.

St. Mary Magdalen.

1. St. Mary Magdalen at our Lord's feet in the Pharisee's house is an example of a soul that has perfect trust in our Lord's love for her, and that can refuse Him nothing in return. She *understood* our Lord, she thought our Lord must love her or He never could have come into the world to die for her, and thus one word from Him was so much to her. Her heart was human, and she felt keenly the cold glance of the Pharisee and its humiliation, but she loved our Lord.

We must learn from her not so much contrition, which is a great grace, or love of our Lord, which is

the highest of all, as a deep conviction of our Lord's love for us, which will bring trust, and out of trust, love.

2. The Pharisee represents another class of souls, timid and vacillating, who hardly dare to let the grace into them, for fear our Lord should ask too much of them. Simon rashly judges St. Mary Magdalen and our Lord—yet our Lord gently tries to win his heart. He speaks to him before He speaks to Magdalen. "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee."

It ought to be a greater joy to us when we overcome the malice and obduracy of some uninteresting soul, than when we have lavished our bounty on some loving good soul.

3. Our Lord's loving complaint, which shows us how His Human Heart feels coldness and neglect, just as we feel when we are ill and suffering, and do not think enough consideration is shown for us, also our Lord shows how He loves *little* loving acts.

"Thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she with tears hath washed My feet. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but she hath not ceased to kiss My feet." Then He spoke to the Pharisee of His Eternal Father when He said, "A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty pence, and he forgave them because they could not pay their debt." These words also show how we are to make stepping-stones of our sins, and that after five hundred falls we may get nearer to God than after only fifty; if we love more, and always trust, we can be forgiven, and begin again after the five-hundredth time.

CONSIDERATION.

On Purgatory.

The subject on which I propose speaking is Purgatory. I do not mean to exaggerate or imagine, but simply to place it before our eyes in all its reality. And what place can have greater interest for us Religious than this region of holy souls, all dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Purgatory, properly understood and seriously thought of, helps us all through life. Our meditations, our every duty, will be more carefully fulfilled if done in the light of Purgatory. To all it will be useful. The generous Religious will be filled with holy zeal to render every assistance to those holy souls. The zeal which moved saints to spend themselves in trying to save souls will move us to assist in liberating them and rejoicing the Heart of Jesus, who yearns to see them united to Him. The ungenerous, from motives of fear, will be led to fulfil her duties carefully, so as to shorten her time of expiation after death. We have all reason to fear it; for, if we are honest with ourselves, we are all ungenerous souls. We cannot bear much. Which of us could hold even a finger in the gas and wait to see the effect? None of us like to be burnt.

Then first let us consider Purgatory in connection with *Religious*. I am not picturing a thing which has not happened, or does not happen. Purgatory is a reality, and *religious souls* are suffering there. Choose from amongst them a class most like ourselves; Religious who have worn our habits, been trained by our Rule. Then consider our relations

with them. What if it should be appointed, as most likely it is, that Providence leaves the souls of our departed Sisters to our charity? This appointment appears from revelations of many saints. We hear of souls of Religious complaining of the neglect of their Sisters, whilst at the same time the usual prayers and suffrages of the Order had been offered for them. How do we know if God will accept the suffrages offered for us, or if He may not apply them to more deserving objects of compassion? Only a few days ago a passage came before my eyes in which a religious soul complains of the neglect of her Sister, "O for one day of perfect silence!" she cries, "one day of truly humble and interior life, how much relief it would afford me!" From this we learn, dear Sisters, that mere *routine prayers* offered by Religious for their departed, are not sufficient. Such God takes from *poor worldlings*, but from *Religious* God expects *kind for kind*. To expiate the Rule broken the Rule must be strictly fulfilled. Recommendation for recommendation, vow for vow, and the practice of virtues attached to the vows,—humility and sisterly charity, to expiate the neglect of the same. In the region of suffering souls how the *Religious* may expect *rigorous justice!* If Religion is the scene of the *greatest refinement* of God's graces, lights, mercies, and tenderness, how also the Religious may expect in Purgatory the *refinement* of *God's justice!* God will glorify His justice in the souls of Religious. What may they expect to suffer for resistance to grace, which is the beginning of pride and rebellion; what for entertaining an interior

spirit of contempt for rules or observances, or continually failing in sisterly charity; for *wilful* faults, and faults where *good-will* has been wanting; failings which, in the eyes of the world, appear trifles, but not in the eyes of God, who expects perfection in His spouses, corresponding to His infinite goodness and mercy in having drawn them from the world to Himself? Even souls destined to a high place in Heaven may have a long expiation for faults and imperfections, for which they were not *truly sorry!* How much this should increase our fear! Wonderful, and yet true it is, that the more *holy* and *pure* the soul is, the greater is its *holy fear.* When we look at those masters of the spiritual life, Alvarez and De Ponte, how striking is this characteristic in their lives! As we watch Father De Ponte moving about the house engaged in his various duties, we hear him heave deep sighs; and, though we might expect some fervent and rapturous ejaculation like that of St. Francis to escape from his lips, we hear on the contrary, words which show that *holy fear* fills his soul: "When Thou comest to judge the world, O Lord, condemn me not, I pray," for the thought of Divine justice occupies him. Here, then, is food for our soul. If we are discouraged Religious it will not benefit us. *Discouragement* leads us to be ashamed to acknowledge our weakness in being full of faults. *Fear* leads to humility, to owning our nothingness and weakness, our capability of every fault, unless sustained by the hand of God. Holy fear tells on all our religious life. It leads us to observe silence: recommendations of Superiors; customs of the Insti-

tute; Holy Rule, and not the Rule only, but the *spirit of the Rule*, and the virtues attached to it, and by our fidelity to shorten our own purgation, whilst, at the same time, we assist the souls of our Sisters who are suffering for their *negligence* with regard to the same—yes, kind for kind.

In this world the most lamented are often the least prayed for. Time passes, and the dear departed are forgotten. Not so in Religion. How our Sisters are looking forward to our sisterly charity! They are *our portion*. Perhaps when they were with us they thought they could rely on our friendship and love to help them! but, alas! how soon we forget them! Perhaps some dear religious Sisters are longing for a day of *perfect silence*, or some *acts of sisterly charity*, that they may be released from their pains. *Prayers* are not enough; deeds are required; and such deeds as are specially dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, —acts of meekness, kindness, and forbearance.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Kingdom of Christ.

Composition of place. Our chapel. Our Lord in the tabernacle, our King.

1. We in our livery of Jesus Christ, our habits. Our Lord has called, and we have responded to His call. He asks us to do as He has done. Our vocation is a victory of souls. How necessary that we should follow our Lord closely and perfectly! We should be foremost in the ranks. Our hearts should be in

the centre of the fight—and they must be mortified hearts. Fear success if you have not such hearts—remember that stars have fallen from Heaven.

Humiliations are the best and kindest gifts God can bestow on us. Try and grow familiar with our Lord in daily meditation—the more we bring Him before us, the more we shall love and imitate Him, and work with more devoted affection. There is, of course, the way of exactness and fear; but it is a dreary road; and souls full of imperfections for years, yet cultivating personal attachment to our Lord, will sometimes give a bound and start anew with a generosity rarely found in souls of the other class.

2. Of those who respond to the call, some will try to be near Him first in the danger.

Do we wish for this place of honour? We can obtain it by fidelity to the toilsome duties of our daily work, and cheerful acceptance of the mortifications we must suffer through common life. In the heart of each one there is "self," an ally of the devil; this is God's enemy, and the one we are called upon to conquer for His sake. We should not only resist the temptation itself, but we should so quell and keep down our passions that they will not *dare to think of rising* in rebellion within us.

Our Lord ought to be our all. Nothing that is not referred to Him can secure a lasting reward. What is the value of the work which you take in hand? If not done in *His* name and for *His* sake, it is useless.

3. Now, answer our Lord's call, each one from her own heart.

Promise Him an entire oblation of *self* and fidelity

in His service. Remember His own words: "He who will not take up his cross is not worthy of Me."

The offering of ourselves, after meditating on the Kingdom of Christ, will be according to the resolution we have made. Our Lord, in asking us from the tabernacle to make the offering, bears the marks of His crucifixion, and so He asks for a crucified offering. We should be merciful to our Lord and make Him amends for the world, which has so little mercy on Him.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Incarnation.

St. Luke i. 26—38.

1. As the Eucharist is to the rest of the Sacraments, so is the Incarnation to the other mysteries of our faith.

To ask earnestly for a knowledge and love of our Lord's Humanity is a step in the spiritual life.

We have not the courage to imitate our Lady, because it costs too much. The Angel Gabriel had never seen such perfection as hers out of God. He left Heaven to find it on earth. Mary's devotion was to the *Will of God*—the safest devotion, the most free from delusion.

Do we like to be interfered with? Do we cling to what we call our "rights"? Do we not entrench ourselves in our own castles? But we left our

castles and our ladyhood to become *Ancillæ Domini* —if we are *Ancillæ*, where is our *Fiat?*

Devotion to our Lady is a great means of avoiding temptation. She should be a bright spot in our lives. Her character was bright, free, active, and gentle.

2. It is our privilege that our life is one of *drudgery;* by this we earn our highest reward, so that we ought to be *bright.*

The devil makes a nest, and lays his eggs in a gloomy heart; he loves darkness. We should be free from all desires that take away the peace of our souls. Sometimes we let very small things destroy our peace. We must be active, always ready to help others, and to have our orders changed, and not confine our activity to work that we like. We should be gentle, unobtrusive in our charity; quiet and calm in our exterior and heart.

3. Mary and Joseph were leading an untroubled life. As soon as our Lord came, suffering came. It is always so when our Lord is in our hearts. It is the law of the crucified.

Be solicitous only about the sufferings you cause to others; care nothing about those they cause you. Religious should be intent on acquiring solid virtue, which enables us to conquer ourselves, and set our lives in order.

Some virtues are beautiful, and gain merit, but can hardly be called solid, because liable to illusion. Almsgiving, exterior mortification, prayer, poverty, love of the Sacraments, are some of this class; the solid are first, humility, which is sanctity, *love of*

humiliations, which is almost as high; and then abnegation, obedience, the queen of virtues, patience, peace of soul, and compunction. Begin at compunction, and go up to humility to attain sanctity. Humility is only grasped bit by bit. Happy shall we be if we gain it grain by grain. These are the virtues which aid us to conquer self. Those which put our lives in order are like that hidden virtue of love of common life, which banishes singularity. To practise mortifications with leave is not singularity.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Visitation of our Lady to St. Elizabeth.

St. Luke i. 39—56.

1. When we are told any great news—that we are appointed to some charge, for instance—and at the same time hear that some one is ill, should we not be inclined to say, "Oh, I have just heard such important news, I cannot attend to that little ailment"?

Our Lady is utterly unselfish, and thinks only of the good she can do. She goes *in haste*. Let us fix our gaze on her. She is perfect in her modesty; there is no disorder in her dress; she is calm and dignified; her whole attitude breathes recollection of God's presence. When *we* are in haste, are we not flurried and easily put out?

2. What a meeting was that between the two

Saints, each preventing the other in charity and cordiality!

St. Elizabeth, the older, paying such deference to her young visitor, and recognizing with the eyes of faith that our Lord was within her, as we now see Him in the tabernacle. She said, "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy." Our Lady replied by her glorious *Magnificat*, that song of humility. She does not deny God's gifts and graces to her. She does not try to pass them over. *True* humility never does; but she instantly refers them to God, and gives to Him the glory of them. St. Elizabeth adds, "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

Can it be said of us that we have believed the word of God spoken by our confessor or Superior? When our confessor says we are not to trouble about such and such a matter, do we leave it so, and go to Holy Communion? Simple obedience from faith is best of all, recognizing God's will spoken by His priest.

If our Superior says we are to act in a certain way or accept a charge, let us accept it, and God will gain more glory from our simple obedience than from our imaginary humility about our unworthiness.

Oh! if this could only be our epitaph, "Blessed is she that hath believed!"

3. What a holy influence over each other was

exercised by our Lady, St. Elizabeth, and St. John the Baptist!

We should never be influenced by manners; if we are, it causes much misery in community life, and implies want of reverence for each other, and is a yielding to nature. Can we imagine our Lady thinking to herself of St. Elizabeth, Is she pleased to see me? During her three months' visit, did our Lady think much about manners? When by obedience we are deprived of our spiritual duties, we should remember that our Lord can act as He pleases—even independently of the Sacraments—just as He chose to sanctify St. John the Baptist in the womb of his mother. During the three months of our Lady's visit what charity she showed, what prayers she made, what devout conversations she held! There was no yawning nor *ennui* nor disgust —no snapping or snarling, no judging of motives—because there was no self.

CONSIDERATION.

The Journey of Life.

We are *viatores*, travellers, journeying on towards our home. Thus St. Paul entitles us. Those in Heaven are *in patria*. We must have labours and sufferings in our way,—a rough one too; but we have our Lord with us, though we are deprived of the enjoyment of His presence, inasmuch as, though present, we do not see Him,—the fruition is reserved for Heaven.

Yet, how full of consolations and blessings is this life of ours, how full of certainty, compared with the life of many good people in the world, who have but vague doubtful signs to enlighten them on their journey! And yet how we grow weary and tired of only having to constantly begin our struggle anew, though sustained and cheered by His Divine Presence. Passions and evil habits, which we thought to have long since brought under subjection, are there still quite strong. Faults, which, if our memory does not deceive us, we undertook to correct in our very first Retreat, and here we are still working at them and have still to begin again. We feel like one rolling a stone up a hill, and when near the top in our imagination find it once more at the foot, and have to commence the upward journey anew. We know that there is a saying that fire clears more ground in a few moments than tools could clear in many days of labour. It seems to me that for us this fire will be brought to bear upon the ground of our heart by means of the Morning Oblation. This we make in union *with* Jesus, not only for Him, in Him, and by Him, but more than all *with* Him, so that He becomes present at all our actions, and we perform them along with Him. We take our meals with Jesus, we make our meditation and spiritual reading with Jesus! How this helps us to overcome our faults! How can we do what gives Him pain and in His very presence, for He is with us? And if we do forget ourselves, how our contrition improves by the same thought that Jesus saw me do the wrong, and He now awaits me to say that I am sorry! This thought

guards our imagination. How much this imagination of ours can go through! How the thought of being united to Jesus makes us drive away the thoughts which He would reject! It helps us to overcome selfishness. He who gave all for us cannot bear to see us seeking self. If a corner of our hearts is given to self, Jesus departs. This union with Jesus helps us to observe sisterly charity, and a sweet devotedness to holy Religion. It keeps us in holy simplicity, for, united to Jesus, all is open before Him, there is no secret corner in our hearts. It is this holy union which gives that air of sweet simplicity and joyousness to the life of a Religious, which so much impresses those who visit a religious house. A man of the world sees it at a glance.

We possess in our midst Him who can cheer and comfort us. What would life be to us if He were not here in the Most Holy Sacrament, hidden, it is true, but, nevertheless, making His presence felt by the happiness and joy which He pours into our souls? Here in His presence let us expose to Him our faults and imperfections, which pain and humble us, and ask His assistance in our struggles to overcome them; instead of cherishing them in our hearts, let us make real efforts to get rid of them, though to our sorrow we may find them sprouting up again; yet they will grow weaker and weaker if we keep up our union with Jesus; and we may yet have the happiness of gaining the victory over them.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Bethlehem.

St. Luke ii. 1—20.

1. After the embassy of the Angel Gabriel to our Lady, God seemed to have forgotten her—to have left her, in her hour of greatest need, to get on as she could.

Does not this remind us of the apparent or real forgetfulness of Superiors? Our Lady had to take a painful journey, and to be exposed to the rude gaze of men. Should not we have thought, "Is this the way God should treat the Mother of His Divine Son?" How very strange this is! And then, perhaps, we should have added, "Thy will be done." I don't wish to give way to wrong thoughts—*but* still it *is* strange—and do we not in this way keep a sore place in our hearts which we do not get rid of? We let some sense of injury, or neglect, or some suspicion, rankle deep down in our hearts, and take root there; and then, when a great temptation comes, this bursts forth and destroys our peace. After a difficult journey of eighty miles, our Lady came to Bethlehem, to find no lodging, "no room in the inn." She is in the midst of a noisy crowd, so repugnant to her love of silence and solitude. At last, by the dim light, they find the poor stable, and Mary can lie down. She is weak and very weary, the darkness of night draws on. Some dread the darkness; "there are fears in the night." What should we have felt then?

2. When our Lord sent the angels to the shepherds, they did not make any difficulty about fulfilling the angels' orders, as regarded their flocks, the distance, the darkness, and coldness of the night; but, with simple, unhesitating obedience, they left their flocks, being perfectly detached, and said, "Let us go and see, that we may adore."

What a beautiful lesson for us! Superiors tell us to do something that is far less difficult than what the shepherds were requested to do, and we have heaps of excuses because we are not detached. Again, the shepherds did not wonder at our Lord choosing them in preference to others; they were filled with awe and reverence at the sight of the angels; but their simplicity was so great that beyond the *fear* (holy fear) they had, there was no thought as to why they were preferred. Was it because they were better than others, more useful, more able to spread the wonderful news? No such thoughts passed through their simple minds. They went into the cave, and adored our Lord in the manger with perfect simplicity, not thinking of the preference shown them, or of anything but simply adoring our Lord.

3. Contemplate the joy of the angels; the smallest faithful preference of God gives joy to them.

The shepherds were the most fit on earth to profit by the grace of being called to Bethlehem, because of their simplicity. They made no inquiries, such as haughty Religious do. Their poverty of spirit and detachment led them straight to our Lord.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Purification of our Lady.

St. Luke ii. 22—38.

Contemplate our Lady.

1. See how faithfully she observes the law; she was completely exempt from the penalty of a purification,—she, the all-pure, the spotless; but, out of respect to the law, she went through the custom.

Do we love our Rules? Is each one sacred to us because God speaks through them? Nature cannot bear checks on self; any safeguard proposed is revolting to pride, but strict observance of Rules is an essential part of religious perfection. Watch our Lady as she goes to the Temple—her perfect modesty—her eyes cast down; how could she think of what was passing around with Jesus in her arms? When we go out into the streets we do not indeed carry Jesus as she did; but is not the spot yet warm with His presence where He has loved to nestle at Holy Communion? How important is our exterior demeanour! Even the poor and ignorant are sharp enough in taking scandal.

2. The service of our Lady imprints the love of purity on her children, and this ought to be joined with humility, kindness, and gentleness; and by this means we can instil a love of angelic purity in the hearts of many who would learn by no other means.

If we like we can become the living image of our Lady. Study her looks, her manner, her walk, the tones of her voice, but, above all, her self-abasement and cleanness of heart. She is the model of self-abjection—the true posture of a creature in presence of its Creator; and this is the grand science of life.

Our Lady was free from idle curiosity, and is a reproach to those who keep the avenues of their hearts open; always desiring, craving, wondering, and listening with hungry ears to the miseries of our poor humanity. It is our thrice-blessed privilege as Religious, to be exempt from this knowledge; let us value it, and ask our Lady, the Seat of Wisdom, to give us a dread of any knowledge which can defile, weaken, or sadden.

3. Behold St. Joseph, the worthy imitator of our Lady's virtues.

They redeem the Child out of their substance; we also can buy Him, and have Him for our own, if we will pay the cost. What a beautiful picture is holy Simeon, a man of one idea—to please God in everything! He was waiting for the joys to come, unlike those who must have something in hand; meanwhile, holy Simeon served God for nothing on earth.

Old Anna, too, is a splendid character. Perhaps she chattered a good bit, and many are tempted to chatter in silence-time. Eighty-four years is a long time. She must often have been weary, and had many pains and aches. She is a good example of fidelity in God's service. Every one, no matter how fervent, is weary at times—prayer and teaching,

work and prayer, it wearies by its monotony. Let us cheer up our hearts, *go on*, stick to it, keep our Rules that we learnt long ago—to keep them in time of desolation. We cannot force consolation to come, but we can *always go on*. Our vows are like, and unlike, the marriage vows. We have espoused our Lord for better, for worse, in sickness, and in health; but not till death part us—but until death shall join us with Him and to Him for evermore.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Flight into Egypt.

St. Matt. ii. 13—23.

1. There are times when we are alone beneath the eye of God; no Superior is there to watch; we have no one to edify or scandalize. Alone—with God only as our witness.

Without any change in community life, we can change from being commonplace, every-day Religious into interior ones, who are always paying to God the homage of the heart.

Let us look at the lowly dwelling—St. Joseph asleep in one room, our Lady and her Divine Child in another. Watch our Lady's tranquil slumber, the calm, peaceful sleep of purity and holiness, of a soul constantly in God's presence, "the sleep He giveth to His beloved." St. John Berchmans' passion was to imitate her, and represent her to others. He prayed that sleep might come quickly, and he tried not to move in sleep so as to be like

her. Let us imagine how she behaved in the silence and solitude of her room.

2. How brief is the order! St. Joseph is not told exactly where to go, nor how long he is to stay, nor how he is to support himself.

Put yourself in St. Joseph's place. Could he not have said: What! is the Most High to fly from the persecution of earth? Is Almighty God to run away from a weak earthly king? Might he not have asked for a little delay, for more exact instructions? No, he does not; he is silent, prompt. He is governed by perfect and willing obedience. He obeys with *alacrity* (a word on which we might most usefully ponder). The message comes to St. Joseph, the head of the family, not because he was the holiest or most exalted.

3. Our Lady does not complain that she was not treated with deference; but obeys simply, cheerfully, and with *alacrity*. She gazes out into the uncertain future without doubt or fear or thought that God is hard. Hard!—how could He be hard? Impossible! The crucifix on the altar tells a different story—a story of love in return for ingratitude, love that never ceased, not even when the last drop of blood was poured out, and a bitter death endured.

The way was uncertain, rough, and dreary, but she accepted it as a mysterious manifestation of Providence. How the dark weary hours of life were consoled and brightened by this thought—so true in every event of life, no matter how trifling—God destined it for me from all eternity. He cannot have designed anything but for my good.

True, our Lady had our Lord with her; but not more truly than we have Him in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, where His abiding presence is our comfort and our hope. Where Jesus finds entrance, *there*, also, enters the Cross, "Happy are they who bear it bravely, thrice happy they who love it." We have constant opportunities of practising the lesson taught us by this great mystery. Obedience often costs us much—the fear of persecution, or what will be thought of us — human respect — clinging to natural affection and love of self—all these are painful to bear; but let us remember we are imitating the Holy Family in their flight into Egypt.

CONSIDERATION.

The Spirit of Prayer.

You know how impossible it is to be true women of prayer without the practice of abnegation and mortification.

What prevents our intimate union with God, but our unworthy clinging to self, and the unmortified affections of our hearts? And yet it was to be women of prayer that God called you into Religion, where none can be truly happy without a love for prayer. If there are any here who have not acquired this virtue, this holy habit of prayer, I beg of them to look to themselves in time; for if the present life of such a one be miserable, what will the next, the future life of such a Religious be? I do not mean the Religious who finds a difficulty in prayer, who

spends the time of prayer in torture, from dryness and distractions, and ends meditation with a feeling of relief that the laborious efforts she has been making have come to an end. But I mean one who shirks prayer, who neglects it. Think of a prayerless day, a day spent without once addressing God, when, as David says, "The soul is as earth without water." Who that loves God could spend many such days? The love of God and the love of prayer go hand in hand: one is the measure of the other. He who seeks to love God, seeks also a love for prayer, and ever earnestly asks it of God. How many graces we lose by neglecting prayer! for our Lord's words hold good, "Every prayer is answered." Scarcely is the eye of the creature raised to God than the Divine Eye falls upon it, and instantly a ray of grace darts into the soul. Every one amongst you can become a lover of prayer. It is a grace to be asked for, and if earnestly sought will surely be granted. The thought occurred to me, — whether by inspiration or not, I do not know,—it was, that we lose the gift of prayer through our want of gratitude to God who bestowed it. This is a point with our Lord which we should never forget. He does not like us to take His gifts, and make them our own without thanking Him. Thus in time of consolation and spiritual fervour, let us think how unworthy we are of such a gift. "Who am I to be thus blest?" Sometimes consolation and an attraction to prayer lead to self-esteem; then God withdraws it. One thing is certain. God desires

to bestow His gifts upon us: and if He does not, it is that we prevent Him by our want of humility, and also by our want of earnestness in asking for them. Humility is truth. The humble soul returns all her gifts to God; and when tried by dryness and distractions labours as earnestly at prayer as when enjoying consolation and comfort. It is not the prayer in which the soul is ravished into Heaven and filled with spiritual sweetness, which shows true love of God; but the one made on the cross, in desolation and suffering, for in this the soul seeks God unselfishly. To become lovers of prayer, much depends on ourselves. If we have not a great facility in prayer, we must let business-like habits and methods make up for it. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi was ravished into an ecstasy at the sight of every blooming rose; so let all things remind us of God and prayer. Father de Ravignan has a good thought on the subject, "Never come before God empty-handed." Thus God commanded the Jews. He loves our oblations. Sometimes from pride we imagine them too small to offer Him; but the truly humble and simple-minded refer everything to God. No matter how trifling the joy, God is delighted to receive it; no matter how trifling the cross we offer Him, He looks into our hearts to see with what love we make the oblation.

Lastly, let all your prayers be made through Mary, and ask through her the gift of prayer. All we obtain from the Sacred Heart must come to us through Mary; all our offerings to the same Divine Heart must ascend through Mary.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Hidden Life.

St. Luke ii. 51, 52.

1. To imitate our Lord really in the hidden life costs a great deal, and is much more difficult than we might suppose, because it requires the greatest interior mortification, which is no easy thing.

He spent thirty years in teaching it to us; but if we go on trying, even though we fail up to the last moment of our lives, we shall have the same reward as if we succeeded. It is of this part of our Lord's life only that the Holy Ghost had said He made progress; and this was to show us that true progress consists in constant fidelity to the interior life.

2. What glory our Lord rendered to His Father by His life of toil!

It was not a lady and gentleman with their little boy who condescended to a life of poverty at Nazareth; but they really lived the lives of poor labouring people in every way; so much so, that no one about suspected who they were. Do we labour as they did for God's glory, seeking only how to please God? The most humble occupation of religious life cannot be compared to the life at Nazareth. A God labouring and toiling to accomplish the will of God! What a wonderful work for souls we can accomplish by our hidden life! Religious life has all the qualities of a happy life.

When we have left the world we ought to be completely unknown to it, our identity forgotten, and

each be only a member of a community, unknown to all save God and our Superiors, and never do anything to bring ourselves into notice.

Our Lady is the model of the hidden life of a Religious. A good method of prayer is to meditate on each of our Lady's senses, and try to model ours on hers; and so, with her manner, deportment, interior disposition, and virtues, endeavouring to copy her. The virtue that never changes is always the least noticed—it is so taken for granted that it causes no remark.

3. The hidden life is the great meditation for us. In the council of the Most Holy Trinity the years of our Lord's life were fixed, as well as the way in which those years were to be spent.

The hidden life teaches us a life of obscurity. This exacts a repression of the most indomitable passion of the heart,—which is a craving to be loved, to be esteemed. What an hourly crucifixion goes on in a soul which has a passion for a life of obscurity! There are souls of this stamp. If we cannot yet attain to it, let us, at least, work with the graces God gives us now; and, perhaps, the day may come when we shall hear, "Friend, come up higher," and an imitation of His hidden life will be given us.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

1. The devil sets up his throne in that part of the house where he has most gratification.

He calls all our bad angels together, for we each have a familiar devil. There are Religious, too, at the devil's parliament,—those who lead others astray, who neglect common life, who give bad example. The devil will tell his followers to tempt a community to multiply their wants, to seek gratification, to murmur when refused, so that holy poverty may be relaxed, and our souls soften, to refuse what is hard to flesh and blood. He will distract them thus in time of prayer. After this he will lead them to pride, so they will become self-willed in opinions and judgment; and the work is done.

2. Our Lord will have round Him His angels, and the Religious who will help Him by their good example, particularly by leading the common life.

He will say, teach other Religious not to desire this or that, to dread the use of creatures simply for gratification—to yield promptly and generously when Superiors refuse their requests—to wish for nothing out of common life—to follow all community exercises without seeking for the smallest dispensation. Then if they have no sweetness in prayer it will at least be solid, and they will gain from it strength to conquer themselves; and thus they will learn true abnegation, from whence cometh humility.

3. The devil sometimes gains an entrance into a community if holy poverty is relaxed, even when sanctioned by Superiors. How much more then will he succeed if Religious dispense themselves without sanction!

"My greatest mortification shall be common life," says St. John Berchmans. The devil may

tempt us to the "love of riches," by leading us to relax in holy poverty, and to love comfort. God needs our help. The work will not be done without us, because such is His will. His enemy and ours is the same, *self*. Few souls are saved, and those with little perfection, by a selfish Religious. The work that God appoints us to do to help Him is not only in appearance, but a *real work*, which we cannot do unless we overcome ourselves. This is the pruning of the vine branches, without which they cannot bear much fruit.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Baptism of our Lord.

St. Matt. iii. 13—17.

1. A humiliation rightly borne before others never lessens our power of doing good. St. John the Baptist lived, laboured, suffered, and died for our Lord, yet he was set aside. "He must increase, but I must decrease!"

Our Lord began His public life by an act of humiliation, ranking Himself among sinners. And then it was that the heavens opened, and glory was given to God. We should prepare ourselves for correction and humiliation. We lose so much by not being prepared. The words of a Superior have almost a sacramental grace for those who are prepared to receive and profit by them.

2. Let us look at the persons—first, the motley crowd surrounding St. John the Baptist, men of all

kinds, all eager about the affairs of their souls. Look at the Pharisees and Sadducees, who braved human respect, and set at naught the opinion of the world, which before they had held in such esteem, in which they were so anxious to maintain their positions and reputation.

St. John the Baptist did not receive them with much consideration, as they might have expected. He said, "Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come?" We should learn to receive direct and pointed reproof, to accept humiliation, and say, "There is a humiliation, so it must be for my profit." We may feel it keenly and bitterly, we may writhe under it, but we accept it, and say it must be good since it came from God, and thank Him for it as He sent it.

3. Then the holy Precursor himself, that type of consummate sanctity, not only was he sanctified from his mother's womb, but he led such a saintly life. Consider his wonderful austerity—his rude clothing—coarse food—and complete solitude; then comes his unbounded popularity, he is followed by admiring crowds, who hang on his word, over whom he exercises such sway; and about all this he is utterly unconcerned and so willing to give it up. He says, "He that shall come after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His floor; and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

Our Lord praised him as He had never praised

man before; he was "a shining light," and when our Lord came he was content to forego it all, and to sink into such utter nothingness that the wicked King who had feared as well as hated him, could cast him into prison; and then he died a disgraceful, loathsome, and bitter death.

That was the end of that glorious and holy life which gave such glory to God. This lesson is not only for Superiors; each of us, however lowly, may take it to heart. We all wish to shine, to excel, and distinguish ourselves.

Let us contemplate our Lord as He draws near the holy Baptist. He has come from Nazareth, from that happy home, where He has left His beloved Mother desolate and sad; even now He can see the traces of her tears upon His cloak: but she gave Him up willingly, because it was His Father's Will.

CONSIDERATION.

The Good Samaritan.

St. Luke x. 25—37.

The Jews considered no one their neighbour who was not a Jew; therefore, our Lord in the parable showed them that the real neighbour, the one who acted charitably towards the man who had fallen among robbers, was a Samaritan, while priest and Levite passed him by.

Our Lord has taken compassion on you by leading you out of the world and bringing you into

your community; and there is no difficulty about who is your neighbour. "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho," that is from grace to nature. He fell among robbers. "And they stripped him." Sometimes we are stripped of fervour and grace; we fall away from our acts of virtue; and then we are wounded by our infidelities; and so we fall gradually. In the Levite, the priest, and the Samaritan, we see one aiming at the highest perfection—one not aiming quite so high, but still good, in the middle state of souls as it is called—and one leading an indifferent sort of a life, and taken up with vain and worldly things. "They passed him by." They see some in need; but they think, "If I do anything it will be a bother, it will cost me something;" and so they all pass by. Then the Samaritan came, and went up to him; he bound up his wounds, and poured in oil and wine, and set him upon his own beast, took him to an inn, and took care of him.

There is a beautiful lesson contained in these few words; and if we meditated on them for years, we should always learn something from them. "He went up to him." Mark well these words, for it is the first step of charity; he went up to him, he bound up his wounds, and poured in oil and wine.

To listen with patience to the troubles of another, and then help her with gentle words—the oil of charity, and the wine of strength and encouragement. It is often a great act of charity to listen well. We come to our examinations, and see what faults come through the tongue, and make great resolutions as to what we shall say, and what we shall not say; but

we do not often think about the importance of being good listeners.

Then the Samaritan, we see, does not simply perform the act of charity and then go away and do no more; but the next day he gives the host two pence, and promises to repay him what he shall spend over and above. We see he gives up his little, and promises the rest of what he is unable to give then. Now, in a community there is always some one in need; and, therefore, there are always occasions for practising these acts of charity. We should go to recreation ready to make ourselves agreeable, and at the beginning send up a loud cry to God from our heart, "O my God, grant that I may do good to some one;" and very often we can do great good by simply being a good listener; for it stands to reason there must be some listeners, and not all talkers.

The reason we like to pour out our own troubles, and not concern ourselves to listen to those of others, is, that we are so wrapped up in that dear object, *self;* and what does it matter about any one else so long as self is all right? Whereas if we forget self, and listen patiently to what others have to say, we can often give a great deal of help by putting in a word of sympathy now and then. Don't look like a very highly polished poker, and as if there were written on your brow, "Don't come near me." And it is a sort of helpful charity you should have, one for another. Like the Samaritan, give of your little—a kind word goes a long way. Listen gently, and let those who have troubles of their own be the more ready to ease the trouble of others. Forget

self, and be one of those to whom any one can come for assistance and will be sure of a kind word at least. Like the Samaritan, give the little you have, and promise the rest.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Woman of Canaan.

St. Matt. xv. 22—28.

1. Ask the grace to have such lowly reverent hearts, as to trust our Lord in the midst of rebuffs and greatest humiliations; not to murmur at God's Providence; to learn how our Lord hides Himself behind creatures, as He hid the love and compassion of His Sacred Heart behind the harshness He showed to this poor woman.

She called and shouted after Him; the Apostles interceded for her—it is rather a good thing to shout at *them*,—but their first object is to get rid of her. "Send her away, Lord, for she crieth after us." They knew He would not send her away empty.

2. But our Lord passes on and takes no notice of her. At last, importuned by His Apostles, He said, "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." He seems to say, "Not for such as thou, rough and wild; thou art not of My flock." Our Lord tries those who are generous. He is so often disappointed in our trust that He eagerly seeks for a soul whom He can try, and rejoices when He finds one. He fears to discourage, to "break the bruised reed," to "quench the smoking flax;" and

yet He desires to try the generous soul up to the last point, that it may gain a more plentiful reward. This poor woman, under the double humiliation our Lord had given her, casts herself at His feet, and looks up into His eyes. She knows she can never look into those eyes without feeling their love and compassion. She utters that beautiful, trusting prayer, "Lord, help me." "O Sacred Heart, help me."

3. But still our Lord refuses the eager panting love, showing great coldness, and harshness, and uttering the hardest words He had ever spoken.

Still pouring into her heart floods of grace and trust, He says, "It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs." And from the depths of her humility and trust, she made that most beautiful answer which is to be repeated by saintly lips in all generations, "Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master." Then the Sacred Heart can no longer contain Itself. "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt!" And her daughter was cured from that hour.

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Washing of the Apostles' feet.

St. John xiii.

1. What a sublime introduction preceded what was of itself a common action! This shows us the

value of the hidden virtues of charity and humility. Let us consider the character of St. Peter: his vanity, presumption, and love of notice. He is always thinking he knows best, bringing on himself many humiliations by his impetuosity; and yet he was never cured till after his great fall. But he never failed in his loyalty to our Lord. He was ever ready to submit after his faults; and this always touched the Sacred Heart.

"Dost Thou wash my feet?"

He did not understand it—he was quite ready to correct his Superior.

"Thou shalt never wash my feet." Calm confidence in his own ideas! Our Lord knew how to deal with him; he could never bear separation. "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me."

Then we see in him the restless running into extremes of an undisciplined mind. "Not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." There are some people to whom you are afraid to make a suggestion; they rush to an instant remedy.

If we could but realize our own weakness, and the need we have of God's help, and His readiness to help us, we should look to Him with so much more confidence; we are like those limp dolls that children try over and over again to make stand up.

Consider the character of the Apostles; the devil is said to have pronounced them "a poor lot." Our Lord called them to be with Him that they might be formed. He was their model, and gave them instructions on any questions or difficulties they met with, just as He does now in the Blessed Sacrament,

We should go to Him in the same familiar way when we want His help.

2. "He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly," teaches us a lesson to correct and confess our real faults, not tormenting ourselves about our past lives, or accusing ourselves of some trifles which only tend to disguise the real faults that we have not the will to correct.

How solemnly our Lord teaches the lesson of what He had done! "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." If we ought to exercise charity towards each other, how much more ought we to be ready to submit and humble ourselves before those who we know by faith represent our Lord to us!

3. The conduct of the Apostles teaches us that we can have reverence and personal love of our Lord at Holy Communion, even if our minds are weary and distracted.

This is *My Body* which shall be *delivered for you.*

When we go to Holy Communion, our Lord's Body is in our power. Like the Paschal Lamb, It is *delivered* to us for our sins. Do we deliver our bodies to our Lord by restraining self-indulgence, which will become harder as we grow older?

He delivers His Body for us, as our Victim of reparation; we spurn this gift when we give way to discouragement. *Do this in remembrance of Me.*

Our Lord loves us to remember Him. How do we use practices that tend to remind us of Him, to

make our thanksgivings profitable, and prevent anything like sameness or routine? And do we then intercede for others, and especially for sinners, and thus remember Him who gave Himself for them and for us?

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Agony and Betrayal.

St. Matt. xxvi. 36—56.

1. Our Lord approached this Agony covered with shame and sadness, sunk in desolation of spirit under the weight of His Father's anger. In this spirit He went through His Passion.

He accepted the intense pain of His Passion that we might not suffer through all eternity. He saw all the dishonour,—the execrations of those on whom He had heaped favours, the insults, the mocking, the loathsome jest, the injustice, all that His most sensitive Soul most recoiled from, poured upon Him; and the torture of His Sacred Body exquisitely formed for pain—the cords, the lash, the tearing of each nerve, the suffering of every limb and every sense.

2. But this was not the worst. He saw all the sins of the people of God, of those chosen by Him, of priests, of Religious—the power of wasted graces, to be turned against God to outrage Him.

His Divinity enabled Him to see and realize the enormity of each separate sin, and all that have ever or can ever be committed; and then He turned His eyes to God, cast down, and blushing for shame, and made His most perfect act of contrition, *and gave it*

to us. We have only to unite our poor, miserable acts of sorrow to the act of contrition He made then, and, if our sins were as great as the sea, our sorrow can be the same, *because it is His sorrow*, vast as the sea.

"Behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ancients of the people."

Our Lord's betrayal, surrounded by a brutal mob, is an image of our souls when we let the reins go, and give way to self-indulgence. Sometimes we unhappily find all the good we have so earnestly tried to gain during a Retreat entirely lost. The passions that are in our hearts, however carefully muzzled at present, when they are let loose may be compared to the mob which assailed our Lord in the Garden. We treat Him, then, in the same way in which they treated Him. In a mob each one excites the others to greater insult and audacity; so it is with our passions. Every inordinate word, that is, every word on forbidden subjects, or at forbidden times, is like another injury to our Lord.

3. How gently and mildly He expostulated with them! How do we expostulate with those who are rough or unkind?

St. Peter cut off the servant's ear because he acted first and thought afterwards, and so was sure to do the wrong thing. How gentle was the rebuke given by our Lord, "Put up thy sword into its sheath." And He touched the ear and healed the man. So like our Lord, always gentle, always unselfish!

CONSIDERATION.

In all things I sought rest.

Let us consider what help these words can be to you—*In all things I sought rest.*

How we all seek peace! It is the object of our search—our rest. *In all things I sought rest.* Now, we know the rest for which God made us—the rest in His Bosom. In our Retreat we have considered this, that God made us with a design, a planned design, the end of which was a place in His Heart —in His Bosom; this He designed and intended I should occupy. For no other purpose was I created, but to be thoroughly His. All He put into me—dispositions, qualities, tendencies, sympathies, all mixed up in my soul for this one end, to fit me for my particular place in His Bosom.

No two beings are created to give God the same glory—but a particular character, a particular place in His Heart. For this alone I am created; this alone will give my soul rest.

Whatever else I may seek after, I shall still be uneasy, restless, out of my place. God made me for that particular place; and my eternal happiness, the everlasting rest of my soul, consists of that for which it was made—first for God's glory, and, secondly, for my own happiness; these two are one. The fulfilment of God's design is the perfect accomplishment of His glory and of our everlasting happiness. God's glory and my happiness are one and the same thing. If we give Him one, we give Him also the other. If

we deprive Him of one, we deprive Him also of the other. What is not God's good, is not good for me. Bring all to bear upon that. Peace is my supreme good. God's interests are mine, and mine are God's; and whatever is good for God, is good for me; and whatever is bad for God, is bad for me.

I was created for infinite happiness.

If this truth takes possession of us, we should have our minds clear, and our hearts strong. If I seek God's glory, I seek what is good for me, and then grow stronger. I have to seek after what is for God, and I am certain it is the best for me. If once we were certain of this truth, and to be so is true simplicity,—God's good is my own good,—then what strength we should have!

It seems to me that souls once convinced of this would embrace three great elements of peace, upon which our present and future happiness depends. The first is to do, each day and hour, each and every action with the full possession of my soul. Secondly, to use my thoughts wisely. Thirdly, to leave off grubbing into my spiritual state, and be up and doing. These are the three principal means of preserving peace.

Instead of doing each action with full possession of soul, we go to our work in a half-hearted sort of way, thousands of vague thoughts hanging about us, detracting from the perfection of our work. All Religious need full possession of all their faculties in doing their work, they need the full, calm possession of self. No thinking about what I said, or what I am going to say—what I shall do when this or that

happens. All these solicitudes fritter away the full possession of our souls. We are divided people—very little people at best; we need all we have to do our work well, even if it were only to scour a dish. We should bring to it honourably and worthily the full possession of our souls. Work is well done in proportion to our talents; but we often seek too much after natural satisfaction, when the soul is far from the thoughts. The one theory upon which God's glory hangs is, that the soul should be calmly possessed, undivided by solicitude. The picture of a full life is one where each action is worthy of God.

That is the first element. The second, and necessary means to the first, is the right way of thinking of our own faults. If we learn to look on our faults as good for us, they would turn to profit. We should turn to God and say, "I am sorry for having pained Thee." Then, quite tranquilly, we should thank God for so generously bearing with the fault, that we might profit by it. Thank Him for the humiliation which will do you no harm. Tell our Lord you are sorry for the pain you have caused Him; then be at peace, knowing that He at once has forgiven you. This way of looking at our faults brings a habit of mind full of peace, and a love of self-abjection. Self-abjection is the fundamental principle of our lives. Without this gladly accepted, peace is impossible.

The third is of vital importance. What is the action of self-love on the soul? To look into itself, to grope about, to speculate about God's thoughts of my soul. Am I pleasing Him? Shall I make progress? Have I fallen back? So many reasons

for dejection and sadness. We spend our lives in moony, dreamy considerations of ourselves. This is a most abominable gratification of morbid self-love in a soul consecrated to God. This perpetual pondering on self—groping, moaning, thinking about self—is diametrically opposed to true simplicity of soul; it is the great enemy of interior peace.

God wishes our lives to be extremely simple. Those who begin to be simple serve Him each day, and each hour, in each action. If, when we commit a fault, we frankly and cheerfully accept the humiliation, then we derive profit from it; if we yield to the habit of looking into self, like a child always pulling up a plant to see if it has grown, we shall be always unhappy. We are each on our own step, and God means us to be happy and bright, and not spend our time in crying and moping because we are not on the next step. When we are contented to labour where we are, then we are lifted up higher; but it is no use groaning and moaning because we are not three steps higher. Try to apply this principle of common sense, to that which is most simple, and yet high spirituality. God has led us to cast away the pleasures of the world, and in their place promises His peace.

"*My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth do I give unto you.*" We are blind and foolish if we do not value this peace above all else. It is our one end in life. Let us, then, be simple, and believe that what is good for God is good for me. I must have this before me in the work I have to do. I must come to the smallest action with all the

faculties God has given me, not thinking about other things. I must be content to suffer from many faults without losing peace. If these disturb my peace I shall never possess it. I must never doubt God's pardon; and I must abominate, as destructive of simplicity, the habit of looking into myself.

Let me, then, embrace the things that are for my peace, and thus fulfil the words, "In all things I sought rest."

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Night before the Crucifixion.

St. Luke xxii. 54—65.

1. There is no self in the words of our Lord in the Passion. He spoke to Judas from zeal for his soul, and to the soldiers who struck Him from zeal for His Father's glory. "Answerest Thou the High Priest so?"

We may apply these words in many different senses,—the way in which our Lord has answered His Father, the great High Priest; the way in which we answer our Lord, who has so many titles, who is our great Pontiff; the way in which we answer Superiors, who are God's representatives.

To expiate our disrespectful answers, our Lord allowed Himself to be charged with want of submission.

Dwell on the *look* He gave to St. Peter.

When we have been humbled, outraged, denied, what sort of looks do we give? Are they such as to

convert souls, or do they tempt them to discouragement and drive them to despair?

See the effects of passion and jealousy in the Jewish priests—see what they lead to. Those same lines are in us. We are faint images of the original. These same passions work in us, in miniature, the same effects. The more our hearts are filled with shame and humility, the more clearly we recognize that spite, aversion, falseness, condemnation of others, come from our own passions, and not from the faults of others. How vague are the accusations brought against our Lord!

2. "What evil hath He done?" What do we say against another? Oh, she is such a torment! she disturbs the peace of the community!

They bring false witnesses against *Him*, and these are believed in spite of their glaring contradictions.

We are glad to believe complaints when they agree with our own opinion, though we suspect they may be false.

See how patient our Lord is. And can we not have patience with each other? Patience is a God-like virtue. Let us then strive to follow the footsteps of our patient Lord—patient amidst the outrages of His Passion—patient with us to the end.

3. Let us strive to enter into our Lord's Sacred Heart early in the morning after that night of shame and ignominy in the guard-room.

He is completely forgetful of Himself. Perhaps He is thinking of the fall of His favourite Apostle. His Passion is but beginning. He is ready to accept

it all. How do we feel when, after a night of pain, or after we have gone through some trouble or humiliation, we are asked to suffer more? Are we full of self-pity, expecting comfort and consideration from others? Our Lord felt the treatment He received from Annas and Caiphas very much. They were Jews like Himself, invested with high religious dignity, and had many graces. Do we not act their part when we are ready to rise up against God's providence and His representatives?

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Passion.

St. Luke xxiii.

1. We should go through the different circumstances of the Passion, and compare them with the occasions of suffering we meet with in religious life. They are drops of the Chalice which our Lord asks us to drink with Him. Can you not drink of the Chalice I have drunk for the love of God? His bonds are our vows; the sufferings of the scourging, our physical pain. He is treated by Herod, who held authority from God, as a fool. He was rejected for Barabbas; are we not sometimes rejected for another—set aside for some one who is certainly more worthy than ourselves? Is not the gall they gave Him like the bitterness we receive when we are longing for consolation?

The accusers of our Lord were offended, because

they were not believed; they thought superiors ought to take their word. "If He were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up to thee."

See our Lord again at the mercy of a mob, and though we did not hurl our execrations against Him, perhaps by mortal sins, were we not at least among the weak who joined the rest? Pilate expostulates with the Jews, pleading with them for our Lord, "Shall I crucify your King?" What a reproach it is to Religious, when seculars, perhaps, can plead our Lord's cause with them, and (if they dared) say, What worldliness there is in your conversation, and in your manner; how can you, a Religious, thus treat our Lord? Expostulation always brings out the good or evil disposition in those to whom it is addressed. What did it do in the Jews? It caused them to bring down a heavy curse on their own heads, when they said those terrible words, "We have no King but Cæsar." They had before this rejected God for Saul, now they rejected Him again for their unbridled passion. There is deep meaning in these words, Pilate *delivered Jesus up to their will.*

2. Dwell on our Lord's bodily suffering in the scourging—how real and practical was His love—see what we have *cost* Him. He was scourged with ropes, thorns, and iron chains, and Mary felt all with her Mother's heart.

There was no kind hand to dress His wounds; and we expect so much solace, such kindness in our sickness and suffering. They added cruelty to pain and insult; they crowned Him with thorns; Pilate brought Him forth clothed in a purple garment, and said:

"Behold the Man, what will you that I do unto Him?"

The Jews who had followed our Lord closely, and are now so changed, are instances of the evil brought about by listening to bad counsel. It is truly said that *they*, not Pilate, condemned our Lord.

"*I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it.*" What awful results have bad words said in passion! "*His blood be upon us and upon our children.*" What fearful words, written for ever in the Book of eternal decrees! But we may say them in a different sense, and ask that this Most Precious Blood may fall on our souls, and wash them clean from sin.

3. Simon of Cyrene was changed by bearing the Cross; first, he was unwilling; at last, his heart was filled with the love of our Lord.

Our Lord stretched out His hands to be nailed to the Cross, completing the offering He made of Himself, when Mary laid Him in the manger, when He stretched out His hands, and said, "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God!"

As we look at the dead Body of our Lord hanging on the Cross, we see that His Passion was one long act of submission, "Obedient unto death." Every wound preaches the same lesson. When the dead Body of her only and beloved Son lay in the arms of our Lady at the foot of the Cross, her will was in perfect conformity with the will of God. It is the resistance of our wills that makes suffering unbearable; and in proportion as we imitate her by resignation to the hand of God,

who strikes us, and by the union of our wills with His will, shall be our share in our Lady's endless joys.

Beg Mary to look at us, and say she forgives our work.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our Blessed Lady.

St. John xix. 26, 27.

1. One of the sweetest graces our Lord gave us was at the close of His life, when, in the person of St. John, He made His Mother ours, she, who had stood by the Cross and *willed* the death of her Son because it was God's will. God's interests and hers were one. After the long training of the thirty years she had lived with Jesus, she had no self left. Imagine what it must have been to have lived with and watched our Lord for thirty years; how she had imbibed His spirit, and when the time of parting came, as we look into those two human faces and human hearts, we understand that God does not want our human hearts to be crushed, but sanctified.

At some period of our life we have probably felt what it was to have a door close on us, which closed an epoch in our lives; as when that door of the cottage of Nazareth closed on Mary, at her parting with her Son. Some day the door must close on us for the last time—when we die; and we shall then certainly make a retrospect of our lives if we have time; and the only way in which that retrospect can give us joy is, if we can truly feel that we have immolated *self*. Mary felt as she looked back on

those thirty years that there had been no self,—all had been purely for God. After the death of our Lord He went to give joy to the souls in Limbo; but He left His Mother in desolation; and when He arose and came to His Mother, she revelled in *His* joy and glory, as only one divested of self could. In proportion as she had shared His sorrow, and sufferings, and labours, she partook of His joy. It was on *His* account that she rejoiced.

2. And what has Mary done for us? She has loved us, taken joy in us, and interest in our work. From our very birth she has had her arms round us. What have we done for her? Can we look up and say sincerely, Yes, I have done something for her in my life; I have always been glad to do or say whatever could promote her honour? Still, with all this we have many times given her pain. But there is this about wrongs done to Mary—we may have pained her, but we have never made her angry. God created her without anger. She is a reproduction of His kindness, His mercy, His love, His compassion; but not of His justice. Even with the cruel executioners, she was not angry; and when we do things that would make another mother angry, the pain we cause her only makes her turn her eyes in pity to our Lord with a prayer for us. As she is never angry, never resents our injuries, it is a deeper motive of shame and sorrow to us, if we have ever dishonoured her by our thoughts, words, or actions—that is, if our heart is in the right place. A saint calls her "prayerfully omnipotent," because God never refuses the prayer she makes.

3. What an inducement this is for you to go to your work with courage; if you can succeed in making one soul love her more, if you can teach it to trust her, to lean on her, to have recourse to her, what a great thing you have done! A soul which loves Mary will love chastity, and its guardian, modesty. It will lead a holy life and die a happy death. How great must be the power of Mary, when she seems able to use her omnipotence to turn even the free-will of man! If not, how could she promise that those who die wearing her scapular should never see eternal fire? If she had not in her hands the means of changing hearts, she would never have promised this grace—for salvation means dying with contrition. God will do anything to save a soul that loves His Mother, or that has loved her. Ask her to obtain for you the grace never to do anything unworthy of your high calling—never to degenerate from the high thoughts of the children of God.

CONSIDERATION.

On Longanimity.

I have just been looking at a picture of St. Francis Xavier. You know this most successful of apostles had also his days of desolation. He saw souls, over whom his sweat was poured out, remain insensible and obdurate: but, instead of being surprised or discouraged at his want of success, he laid it all down to his little love for Jesus and Mary. He felt that if he only could get that, then success was certain.

Hence his continual cry, "O Jesus, O Mary, when shall I love you truly?" We must think, as St. Francis Xavier did, that discouragement is out of place, that what we ought to aim at is an increase of love, and we should exclaim often after his example, "O Jesus, O Mary, when shall I love you truly?" All this happens to fall in well with my subject.

The Patriarchs, who so often are brought forward in the Church Offices, were models of this virtue. They saved and sanctified themselves by long, long waiting, always hoping for a blessing, which, as far as this life went, never was given them. Bad as the Jews were, there was always a certain number of them called to perfection,—the Saints of the Old Testament, men whose lives were full of the thought of God and His coming, and what virtue they must have had to have lived on in this constant expectation, without ever realizing their wish! After all, we are not required to practise longanimity to the heroic degree as the old Patriarchs were; we *have* what they sighed for—our Lord—His blessing, His sight, His very presence. We do not enjoy His sight; but faith teaches us we possess Him; and how often have we not felt the strength which comes along with His sacramental presence within us! So that longanimity for us is an easier virtue; still we cannot get on without it. We especially need it in *prayer*, in *work*, in striving after *perfection*.

Here are three points for you, solid as a rock.

(*a*) You are women of work, intelligent *work*; and if your parsnips do not turn into lilies straight off, you think it is a failure. You must wait God's time

when He sees fit to let you see results, and be always waiting, always hoping, always expecting.

(*b*) If we want to succeed in *prayer*, we must be prepared for longanimity and perseverance. During our moments of reflection at the close of each meditation, we see the fruit gathered is but small; nevertheless, we face the difficulty, and intend to do so over and over again. To-day's was a poor affair; but God will give me to-morrow, and I'll try again. At last comes a day when, oftentimes unknown to ourselves, we receive a spirit of prayer—feel a peace we cannot account for. This spirit of prayer, like so many other graces of our lives, has come so noiselessly that we are not aware of it; one by one inordinate affections have been given up, the soul is now free to listen to God, and in union with Him the trials of life pass almost unheeded; at any rate, suffering borne with Him and for His sake is not able to disturb our peace. The precious fruit of longanimity in prayer is ours.

(*c*) Striving after *perfection* is another way of saying "*self-conquest.*" Now we require indeed the virtue of longanimity. Faith must be called in here. It was a principle of faith which enabled us to quit the world, and enter Religion; this same principle of faith keeps us in it: it is faith joined to longanimity, the cream of humility, which will make us die in joy, faithful children of the Institute to which our Lord has deigned to call us.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Resurrection.

St. Matt. xxviii. 1—15.

1. Let us ask for joy with Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. We do not need a sensible or animal joy, but a supernatural one—such as one might have at the ordination to the priesthood of a dear brother —joy in *his* joy.

When life is monotonous, or our work not to our liking, or we are weighed down by other troubles, then let us remember that as our Lord's sufferings were changed into the Resurrection joys, so will our sufferings speedily be over, and the happiness will last for ever. Our Lord's Soul re-entered that Body, which was covered with the marks of our sins ; and then He hastens to console His Mother, so desolate and overwhelmed in a sea of suffering at the fresh memory of His Passion. And see how prompt He was to console those who had suffered with Him —His Magdalen, the holy women, the Apostles.

2. The Lord has risen, and hath appeared to Simon.

Look at St. Peter at the foot of the Cross on that Sunday morning. He is a picture of true shame and abiding sorrow for sin. His bitterest thought was, that his fall had been necessary for him. He had been so full of vanity, presumption, contempt of others. He had been constantly wounding our Lord by his arrogance ; his only redeeming quality was his love for our Lord, which could never suffer him to

leave his Master, in spite of so many reproofs and humiliations. And what a fall had been his! On the day of his Ordination and his First Communion to deny, with oaths and curses, that he knew our Lord! What an apostasy! But now he is full of shame, yet sure that he is forgiven; never doubting our Lord's love for him; not discouraged; full of true, unselfish joy for his Master in His Resurrection. Those penitent tears will continue to flow to the end of his life. His only cross will be the veneration of the faithful. Our Lord comes to comfort him. He "appeared to Simon." See the delicate consideration of our Lord in appearing to St. Peter when he was alone.

3. Never doubt our Lord's perfect forgiveness. Study the *Imitation* well—it will help you to keep up the spirit of the Retreat; and be sure to pray before and after reading it. *The truth will set you free.* Free from all false principles and judgments. *All that is not born of God shall perish.* This teaches us only to value what is supernatural, and to walk towards God in simplicity, without anxiety, and without attachments. In chap. xxxvii. of book iii. we are told to expect a change of dispositions—to be now up, and now down; but, through all these variations, we must keep the eye of our intention pure, single, and fixed on God. Do not expect to keep the lights you have had during the Retreat; *they will die out,* and we must not mind as long as we let them do their present work. Our Lord is there still; and He can, and will give us others when He chooses, which will take us on still further in our spiritual life, and unite us more closely to Him.

LAST MEDITATION.

Our Risen Lord.

St. Luke xxiv. 13—35.

1. *And Jesus drew near, and their eyes were held.* They did not recognize our Lord under the form of a creature. It is so difficult when we are out of Retreat to see Him in our daily life.

Art thou a stranger? Good inspirations when they come are so often strangers. Our Lord drew out their thoughts so mildly, and so patiently. He spent time with these poor simple, stupid folk. Teaching pious fashionable people is often not our best work; but rather when we are labouring over some poor ignorant child, perhaps rather repulsive.

Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet. They do not think so now. They have allowed their faith and trust in Him to be shaken, because things have gone so contrary to what they expected, and they think God has been making a mistake. This is not at all as He should have acted. Just like ourselves—we expect after Retreat all will go well—we make a plan of particular examination, and think we are going to do a great deal; then a temptation comes, we fall down with a bump.

"We *had hoped* He would have redeemed Israel; but this is the third day, and it is all over."

Then comes discouragement. No; the year will be planted with crosses, and the progress will consist in falls and risings; but there will be much greater submission to authority.

There was so much love and good-will in these disciples, in spite of their weakness. "*Stay with us, Lord, for the day is far spent.*" What a beautiful prayer, and especially when we are growing old!

2. "*And He went in with them.*" Our Lord likes to be pressed; He took bread, and their eyes were opened. Holy Communion brings light. Some foolishly stop away, dreading the responsibility of going; it is a far greater responsibility to stop away.

If, in our Communion, we do nothing else than sit down beside our Lord, feeling that He knows us, and loves us, even though we do not say a word, and are as dry as a stick, our Communions are profitable, and we shall draw from them a real good. It is as if, when dispirited, dry, and tired, we were to sit down by some one who loves and understands us without saying a word, and were to rise up refreshed and strengthened by the inter-communion between the two souls. Then, how much more shall we be refreshed and strengthened by our Lord's visit!

"*And rising up the same hour they went back to Jerusalem.*" They did not stay to enjoy contemplation, but went in charity to others.

St. John xxi. 24—30.

3. We should pray for docile minds and willing hearts, ready to believe and put in practice all the Retreat has taught us.

St. Thomas was for eight days separated from his community, and in a state of insubordination and pride. He would not believe with the others, or be

happy with them. He gave our Lord pain; but Jesus was watching over him, and was determined to bring him back. Thus does our Lord ever deal with us—the experience of the year has taught it. He appeared in the midst of them, as He does to us in Retreat; and though the first glance at our Lord's eyes has taught Thomas that indeed "*it is the Lord*," He makes him go through that humiliation, which was so good for him and for us. Firmly and gently our Lord insists on his putting his finger into the Wounds, and his hand into the Sacred Side.

In that prayer of St. Thomas, "*My Lord and my God*," is included all we have to say to our Lord at the end of the Retreat—all the trust and faith we have in Him, that He will help us to keep our resolutions. Our Lord's words are, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; but *blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.*"

Second Retreat.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Divine Light.

1. The *Imitation* says, "There is but little light in us, and this we quickly lose through negligence." Our greatest need is more light. The want of light is the great obstacle to progress in the interior life, and our own ignorance of our darkness is one of the greatest.

Few care to pray for light. We do not think it worth our while; yet light is what we want. Light in the brain trickles down into the will, and the act follows. Reproach yourselves, not with having done your work badly during the past year—that would be folly,—but with having done far less good than you might have effected if you had had more light. Want of light tells upon our work for souls. We cannot counsel and instruct them properly; our words have no force, because "conviction" is wanting; it also lowers the motives of our actions.

2. Want of light makes us ask for wrong things—not bad things, but those which are not the best for us.

We are perpetually worried and anxious about our little needs, to the exclusion of God's greater glory; whereas, if we begged for the extension of His Kingdom and the good of souls, He would look after our own interest. If we made our principal prayer consist of the three first petitions of the Our Father (which are, no doubt, the chief prayer of the angels), our Lord would be sure to see we had all we wanted.

The more we give way to inordinateness the less light we have; our reason is dimmed, and our judgment also. Besides which, the wear and tear of life and its constant drudgery diminish light; therefore, Retreats are recognized as essential helps in the pursuit of perfection.

3. Place yourself during these coming eight days specially under our Lady's protection; invoke St. Teresa, the great teacher of practical prayer; forget not our good and kind father, St. Joseph. During Retreat keep perfect solitude, thinking only of "my soul and God," and the work of God in my soul.

Do not begin with any fixed determination—that is a mistake; but simply resolve to be *perfectly docile* in the hands of God, and determined to be generous with Him.

We are all perfectly sincere in our morning oblation, but the bustle of daily life and its duties destroys that purity of intention, and so we lose much merit; but if we had light to see things at their true value, we should not so easily forget. Pray, therefore, earnestly for light. God is passing by now, as He did by the blind man, Bartimæus; and if we only cry aloud, no matter how feebly, He will stop and listen.

Ask, then, with great confidence. He and all His angels are watching us with special interest and longing. If we spend the whole meditation making this petition it will be well spent. Ask that He may flood your souls with light; not the light which will inflate, but light that will make us ashamed, that will make us see ourselves as He sees us, and lead us straight to Him alone.

SECOND MEDITATION.

God our Creator.

1. "Man was created." These are the first words of the fundamental meditation, and they contain sufficient food for reflection. Created out of nothing by God, so we have a claim upon Him. He is bound to help us, no matter how bad, how miserable, how unfaithful we are. Let no one say, "*I* can't expect help, I am too bad." This is a trick of the devil, and very untrue to God. Our confidence in Him shou'd be unbounded. Oh, if we only knew the wonderful happiness of *perfect* trust in Him! Consider the love of a mother: no son, however wicked, ungrateful and selfish he may have been, but knows that, as soon as he chooses to return, even after years of wandering, he will be most freely pardoned, and fully restored to favour, after the first few words of even slight affection. All the mother's yearning love will overflow her heart once more, and she will restore him to his former favour. Now, our Lord cannot give to others what He Himself does not possess; and as He has implanted this devoted

love in the heart of a mother, therefore He must possess it Himself in a supereminent degree, together with the wise tenderness of a father.

2. Let us try to realize this, and understand our relations to Him as our Creator, casting aside all fear, approaching Him with loving confidence: the more complete our misery, the more entire should be our trust. By one great wave of His grace, He has, as it were, swept us into Religion—silly, foolish, vain as we were. The discipline of religious life has done something to train us; nevertheless, after years spent in Religion, we are bound to confess how little progress we have made.

3. Consider two Religious who do the same work, and bear the same fatigue—how different is their merit before God because of their different intentions! Let us go back to our last meditation, and pray for light, pray for one abiding intention, which will form a spiritual backbone in our lives. Let us ask to be penetrated through and through with one idea; as St. Stanislaus said, "I was not born for trifles," or St. Aloysius, "How will this affect my eternity?" We confess that we come from God—that we live by Him, that we go to Him—but are we *penetrated* with this idea?

No one ever despises his own work—an author loves his book, an artist his picture. God is our Author, our Artist, and He cannot bear to see anything done to spoil us. If we realized how sensitive He is about us, how great would be our confidence in Him; like children we should place our hand in His, and walk forward where He leads.

CONSIDERATION.

On our Judgments of Others.

We have considered that our God formed us, that He made us, and that He knows us intimately, our constitution both of body and soul; that He knows perfectly well the organization of our bodies, from the smallest fibre within them, and the most hidden operations that are passing in our souls. He knows all, makes allowances for all, and bears with all, in His infinite loving considerateness. He is patient with all, and that patience is one of His attributes for which He is so little thanked. We should, with humble, loving, grateful hearts, constantly thank Him for His infinite patience in bearing with us.

Now He made us, and knows us; but we did not create each other, consequently do not know each other. How can we presume to pass judgment on or criticize others, when we are what we are? If we know so little of ourselves, if we cannot even understand the ailment and infirmities to which our bodies are subject, if we are ignorant even of the meaning of those things that are passing in our souls, how can we dare to judge or to pretend to know about others? We presume to arrogate to ourselves the power of deciding what we will tolerate, and what we will not. "I can stand this, but I can't stand that." Some cannot bear this defect, and some cannot bear that; some can't stand meanness, some can't stand untruths, some can't stand rudeness; and so on. But, if we look within ourselves, we shall find very

often that the faults we condemn so in others are either fully developed, or, at the least, latent in our hearts. I remember one of our Fathers once saying, that what he condemned in other priests, he was certain to find sooner or later in himself; he said, "There were three things I was terribly down upon, and all three of them I have had to acknowledge, and bear in myself." I remember the story about some negroes; when they quarrel they always finish by calling each other, "Oh, you black nigger!"

This is the way with us—we are severe, and down upon others for faults and defects, hardly more glaring than our own. Who are we that we should dare to make laws as to what is to be tolerated, and what punished? Poor, weak, miserable, little, wretched creatures, hanging by the thread of God's infinite, loving, patient, tender compassion! We have two lives to lead—our inner spiritual life, hidden with God, and our community life.

In time of Retreat, or in those moments when Almighty God lets in upon our poor souls one ray of His light, to enable us to see something of our own utter misery, we may acknowledge our deep abasement; but often after a generous self-humiliation, we come into contact with something unpleasant to our nature, and we are up in arms again at once.

We say, "It is our nature, we can't help it;" but we can, and we must.

We must have the large-hearted, large-minded, tender, compassionate, patient liberty of spirit, that characterized our Lord; or what shall we say when called on to give an account of our stewardship?

There is not one of us that is not capable of committing any fault, no matter how serious or grave. If we have true humility, we shall never fail in charity; for charity and humility are twin sisters, they go hand in hand—where one is, the other is sure to follow, one cannot live without the other. True genuine charity is founded on humility—that humble self-knowledge which is so conscious of its own defects. The virtues of charity and chastity also are closely entwined; the perfection of the latter is a reward for the exercise of the former. Let us have a horror of intolerance. "*Chaste and gentle make us.*" The Church herself, in her beautiful hymn to our Lady, unites these two virtues together, and bids us ask our Lady, their great model, to help us in our trial and struggle to gain the grace to preserve these two beautiful virtues in all their shining and transcendent lustre.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Praise and Reverence.

1. "Man was created to praise God."

What a noble end, and so easy! The world says, "We can't, we are too much occupied; we have no time to sing God's praises." But the Church, never blind to the wants of her children, says, "I will see to that; I will set apart some of my creatures for that special service, which shall be their chief occupation." And so Religious are publicly set apart for that great purpose. How do we fulfil it?

Do we praise Him at our meditation and prayers? Praise and blame are two opposite things, and we cannot be doing both at the same time.

Every time we blame any one, no matter in how slight a degree, we are taking away from our capacity for praising. St. John Berchmans made a list of all the Fathers of the Society he knew, and opposite each name he put the characteristic good quality of each. No one, even the worst sinner on the earth, is wholly bad,—every one has some good quality. The Church commands a priest after Mass to say the *Benedicite* as his thanksgiving, as if to say he had received a gift of such infinite price he could not return enough thanks for it, but invited all creatures to join him in thanking God. What a beautiful life is the life of one who constantly praises God! She is as a living sunbeam in the community.

2. Man was created to reverence God. Reverence follows praise, and is a most essential duty. We acknowledge that we should praise God; but do we under all circumstances praise Him? It is easy when under consolation and joy, but do we in desolation and affliction? No; then we grumble. And grumbling easily leads to murmuring against God's providence, instead of showing Him reverence. Let us imagine ourselves, as St. Teresa was so fond of doing, alone on the earth, face to face with God, with His beauty, His love, His goodness beaming forth from His Divine eyes. Alone as we shall be at the Judgment, so let us imagine ourselves alone now. Our life is but a series of steps leading us on to the feet of Jesus. Let us try to realize the

reverence due to Him, by *calling to mind His Infinite Perfections.*

3. And we may also learn to reverence Him, by the reverence *He* shows His creatures. Holy Scripture says, He treats us with "great reverence." He respects our free-will; He will not coerce us, nor can all the devils in Hell hurt us against our free-will; even poor sinners He treats with respect. How then should *we* treat each other, spouses elect of God, chosen out of thousands? If we walk in this spirit of reverence, what a pure atmosphere we shall diffuse around us! what grace and dignity we shall possess! how we shall excel in modesty! what real love and obedience towards Superiors! recognizing God in all His creatures, what a perfectly religious life we shall lead! It will give to our lives calmness of spirit, and save us from many sins. Let us contemplate this beautiful picture until we are enamoured of it; we shall find therein ample food for meditation.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the use of Creatures in God's Service.

1. "All other creatures."

If we praise God and reverence God, service is sure to follow. God watches us amidst His creatures. What pain we give Him when we prefer them to His will! They are all made for our use and benefit.

Let us divide creatures into three categories, the

better to help us. The first to contain all the creatures we can see or touch — such as food, clothing, implements of work. The second, all that come to us direct from God—as weather, or health. The third, those that come to us from creatures, independently of our free-will. How do we receive all these?

2. It is easy to recognize the first and second classes as coming direct from the hand of God, and to kiss the hand that sends them; but the third we are apt to repine at; we do not see God's hand in them at all. We grumble and are discontented, without reflecting that *all* is ordained by God for *me*, for *my* welfare. He will not let anything happen that can do me the least injury; even things that seem the most opposed to my welfare are all intended for my good. And, if we look back on our lives, we shall find that the heaviest cross that was ever laid upon us, which seemed at the time to crush us to the very earth, was, in reality, the beginning of God's mercy for us, the turning-point in our lives.

3. Let us, then, determine to use creatures in as far as they help us to our last end. All creatures contain the germs of good and evil; all may help us or mar the attainment of our end. It is an heretical doctrine to say we cannot help our likes and dislikes; we can and must; and in this, wisdom and light will help us. The two extremes we must avoid are, repugnances and inordinate affections towards any creature, using them only as a workman uses his tools—not out of particular affection for a saw or hammer, but as a means to an end,

Let us beware of their fascination; it is like velvet with sharp steel beneath, or like the thorns hidden amongst rose leaves. If we look back on our falls, we shall find that all arose from some repugnance or disorderly affection. We have all to learn our lesson at the cost of experience.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Repetition.

1. Let us examine ourselves most carefully on the use we make of creatures. The points are dry and uninteresting, perhaps, but most useful and practical, and unless we get them deep into our hearts and heads we are building on an unsafe foundation. Common sense and true piety go hand in hand; indeed, the latter is nothing without the former. How do we use such creatures as—our food? is it either in excess or the contrary?—our health? which is not our own—our work, and our manner of doing it? is it in one of the three ways—not doing it, doing it badly, or occupying ourselves with other things?

2. Our Sisters, how do we treat them? coldly, or with too much affection? Our obedience, is it loyal, hearty, entire, willing? or do we try to escape from it in little ways, or else say we wish to do things in our own way? Our temptations, do we turn them to account, make the use God wishes us to make of them, by at once making an act of the opposite virtue, thus, not only conquering our foe, but casting him down? Many have acquired this habit during Retreat, and so attained great sanctity. Even our

faults can be turned to great use and merit, by rising again at once, humbling ourselves, making a *hearty* act of sorrow, and then going quietly on, more resolutely and determinedly than before. In this way, even if we fall ten or twelve times a day, we shall give more glory to God than we had deprived Him of by all the falls.

3. Let us in our use of creatures imitate our Blessed Lady as *Mater Purissima*, a title given her by the Church on account of the perfect use she made of creatures; suffering no defilement from them, because she used them as they were meant to be used,—as a means to an end. What a perfect use she made of our Lord! immolating Him to the will of His Father, delivering Him up to ignominy, shame, torture, and the most cruel and disgraceful death.

We can only use creatures rightly by taking all equally from the hand of God, recognizing them as sealed with the seal of His Divine Providence; and so using them that we suffer no defilement from them. What a sinless life we should lead if we used them thus, and how much misery and sorrow we should save ourselves!

CONSIDERATION.

On the Right Use of Failures.

"So long a time have you been with Me, and you have not known Me."

How truly might our Lord address these words to us, and also those others He addressed later on, in another sense to His disciples, "You know not of what spirit you are."

We do not understand our Lord, and we do not understand each other, and these misunderstandings are the common bane of community life. How much unhappiness, misery, and real suffering are caused by it! how much that an act of humiliation, a few words of explanation, would set right! If we could only see into each other's hearts, what misunderstandings would be saved!

The zealously active soul is ever on the watch to set these right, to smooth over the differences, and many are the opportunities in community life. But, this is not the worst: we not only misunderstand each other, we misunderstand our Lord. Oh! if we could only realize the way in which He considers us; if we could only know and understand the manner in which He watches each phase of our spiritual life. We learn a wonderful lesson from the prayer St. Macarius taught St. Thais: "Thou who hast created me, have mercy on me." Thou who hast formed me, who hast made my body with its humours, affections, temperament, constitution; Thou who knowest the current in which my humours run, who knowest the heat or sluggishness of my blood, Thou who knowest my strength and my weakness, Thou who knowest my every act; and Thou who hast made my soul, who hast given me my natural character, who hast given me such and such tenderness, who hast left me such weaknesses—have mercy on me!

Thou, O Lord, knowest the individual characteristics of my soul, Thou hast made such endless varieties, Thou hast made one so gentle and yielding,

another so haughty and imperious, that it would take a whole lifetime of constant struggle to prevent even its outward manifestations of pride, one so given to prayer and contemplation, another so active and full of zeal, one so cold and reserved, and another so very amiable, and prone rather to yield to earthly attachments.

Thou knowest all, and Thou knowest the inward struggle, the constant defeats, the bitter failures.

Let us go to Him and say, "Yes, Lord, these are all I have to offer Thee,—my weaknesses, my defeats, my falls, my meannesses, my prevarications,—here they all are, and I thank Thee for them; these are all I have to show after a day's fight."

There are two ways of looking at these failures: there is the angry, proud, disturbed way: "There's no use trying,—I can't be good; it's all of no avail; I shan't try; I can't go to Holy Communion to-morrow; God help me"—and this, alas, is the too common way; but the humble, meek acceptance of faults and failures is the deep foundation of true spirituality, of high sanctity; and there are many among you called to be great saints.

To accept our failures in a truly humble spirit, not to be surprised or discouraged, to go on humbly, courageously, calmly, generously fighting in spite of all—this is true sanctity; this gives real glory to the Sacred Heart; this is true humility, it is taking a right view of God, and of ourselves. And if from this we can rise still higher and say, "O Lord, I am willing to go on still struggling, fighting hard constantly, to the end, to the last moment of my life; and even to

fail, to be conquered constantly, to have nothing to show but defeat and failures, provided only that Thou art glorified." For He has formed us; He knows our weakness; He knows that it perhaps would take one, or seven, or ten years, or even a lifetime of hard constant struggle, to reach only the point where others begin. Let us make a right use of our failures, and not be downcast.

God sometimes permits the veil to fall between us and Him: as we read in the *Life of St. Francis of Sales*, he was so oppressed with this dreary feeling, with this dire temptation to blank despair, that throwing himself on his knees before our Lady, he made his celebrated prayer, and asked her to pray for him, to help him to be able, if he could not love God for all eternity, at least to love and serve Him during life. Thus he turned the enemy's weapons against himself, and conquered him by his own snares.

As a rule, these extreme cases of the uttermost desolation and abandonment are only felt by great saints, and we need not greatly fear that we shall have to endure them; but they teach us a lesson of patient, persevering, generous, untiring, constant struggle, in spite of constant failure. That is true sanctity which gives glory to God, which shows that we do not misunderstand Him, that we know how lovingly He watches every movement of our souls; how earnestly He scans each phase of our spiritual life. It is not the conquest that is so pleasing to our Lord, but the struggle; and a life of continual failures borne with patience, is more to Him than deep devotion experienced in success.

Let us put ourselves lovingly at His Feet at night, and give Him the weaknesses, cowardices, basenesses which trickle imperceptibly from out our very soul, and thank Him we have them to give Him. One day of humble acceptance of failure, of generous, sustained struggle, in spite of defeats, in the midst of constant falls, is better than one month of triumphant victory.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Sin.

1. In the beginning of the Retreat we tried to think how intimate our connection with God is, and to impress ourselves with the thought of the *union* that must exist between God and His creatures. If our minds were convinced of this truth, we should clearly see that to turn away from God was indeed *suicide*, by the separating of our interests from those of our Creator.

The end of the creature was to be the eternal sharer of God's happiness in the drinking of the torrents of God's heavenly delights. This is seen in the end of the Angels before their trial. But, before they were confirmed in everlasting bliss, they had to recognize their own nothingness. Man has nothing but that which he has in union with God; and if he asserts a right, contrary to this, he becomes a rebel. This is what, according to St. Paul, we read: "*For who distinguisheth thee? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?*" Why

do you rejoice save that all the power of being is only that you may possess God?

2. What was the sin of the Angels? The asserting of a separate being, or the exaltation of their powers and gifts as coming from themselves—this is pride, the separating of our interests from God.

All the good qualities that God has given us, so long as we look upon them as gifts of God, should be recognized and used. It would be a mistake not to see or use them; because, if we recognize them as gifts from Him, they will lead us to thank Him for them, and not glory in them as our own. If we have natural gifts, or have acquired habits of virtue in Religion, and have made progress, we have to thank God, and recognize that He is the Author of the gifts and virtues acquired. Sin, therefore, is an admission of an interest or being separate from God; this is the crime by which the creature asserts itself as separate from the Creator. If there had been no Redemption, God would have said, "You have separated yourselves from Me by sin, remain so;" and all creation would indeed be separated from Him.

The Angels, so marvellously gifted by God, wished to shake off their dependence. They did not take, as St. Ignatius remarks, the means to keep themselves in submission. They thought they could enjoy God's gifts without Himself. They sinned once; and God cast them down for ever.

3. God made Adam and Eve exquisitely beautiful and perfect; and so enraged were the devils with God, for filling their place with creatures made of clay, that they determined to do their best to ruin

man. In the Garden of Eden, the devil came behind the leaves, and suggested to Eve to eat the apple, that they might be as gods, urging them to independence; mocking at the threat of God, Ye shall die, he said, Oh, *no!* you *won't* die. The same suggestion overcomes us, and the love of our own will leads us to sin. Poor Adam and Eve, they sinned once, and the effects of their sin are visible thousands of years after. We may well be patient with them, when we think of the countless number of times we have offended God ourselves, deliberately, and with malice.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Our own Sins.

1. If you are lazy you will spend the time of this meditation doing nothing, saying, "My sins have been forgiven long ago, why think of them over again?" But, it is wise to take St. Ignatius' advice, and so stand before God during this meditation, as if every sin of your whole life were clinging to you; and not a single one of them had been forgiven. If you can do this without getting into a silly fright, which always does harm, your soul will experience great benefit. Have you taken the means to keep yourselves out of sin? Every passion can be quelled if you only choose to set about it in the right way. After all, if you were forgiven, that is God's work, not yours. The sin is as much yours as ever it was. And you

have sinned with the mangled Body of our Lord before your eyes, for you can never kneel at the foot of the Tabernacle without seeing above it the memorial of your sins.

2. We ought not to look on our sins as on those of some half-savage criminals, and think that in comparison of such we are innocent; and that great contrition for our sins is exaggerated; but we should look on our Lord as our Father, whom we, as His children, have coolly and deliberately grieved and offended; and remember that one of our small faults has pained Him more than the great sins of the poor and worldly, who have not known Him as we have, nor been favoured and chosen by Him as we have. Such a thought as this it is that has made saints say and feel they have been more ungrateful to our Lord, and have grieved Him more than any one else in the whole world—it is this that has given them their intense contrition.

3. To some degree our souls are still enslaved by sin, as long as any passion or evil habit remains.

If we could realize this, how easy it would be—to be *ashamed* of ourselves! We should love to be corrected; we refuse correction because we have no shame—this is the cause of all our self-preference, and all our faults. Those who have never committed even one mortal sin, are often full of self-conceit, sloth, blindness, and uncharitableness, and other passions, and hurt the loving Heart of God still more by frustrating His dearest wishes, than a sinner who has never known what the other has wasted. We must be *penitents* before we can be saints.

Shame and sorrow make up true contrition. Let us be always clothed in the robe of shame; it becomes us; we have it ever at hand; ever the means for true contrition.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Meeting our Lord at Judgment.

1. When we kneel at our Lord's Sacred Feet, and look into His Divine Eyes, and seek there for our sentence, then, indeed, shall we need our mantle of shame and confusion to cover us. Oh! if we need it *then, why* not use it constantly *now?* why not keep this abiding sorrow for sin before us, not to discourage us, to cast us down, and make us timid or sad, but to make us recognize that we are nothing but living ulcers? Though our sins have been blotted out in the Precious Blood, still we have committed them, and it is good for us never to forget them; and when in prayer we find dryness and difficulty, let us clothe ourselves in our mantle of shame, and bow down in lowly humility of heart before our Lord, and acknowledge our shame; He can never resist this; it will burst the tabernacle door, and He will come and help us.

2. St. John tells us, that if we love one another our judgment is secure.

Zeal for souls is of no good if we do not love our own community: it is only a delusion; charity begins at home. There are a great many commandments and counsels to keep; but all the Fathers of the Church are agreed that St. John was right when he

said, that *if we love one another we have fulfilled the law*. We cannot love Jesus Christ whom we cannot see, if we do not love one another whom we do see. *Judge not, and you shall not be judged.* There will be no *judgment* for those who never judged others; they will go straight to the Sacred Heart. Suppose when looking at a dead Sister, we remembered her unkind judgments of others, oh! how we should tremble, as we prayed for her soul!

3. *Whatsoever you have done to one of these My least, you have done it to Me.*

These are our Lord's own words; they do not apply to a hasty word of unkindness, repented of as soon as uttered, but to unkind thoughts and judgments wilfully indulged, and finding vent in bitter unkind words. As often as we give way to these, we are doing it to our own judgment, for every unkind word, thought, or judgment will rise against us, unless washed away by the tears of the most heartfelt contrition. Our Lord is willing to forgive what is done against Himself, and say, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;*" but what we do against one another, we aim at Him, it goes straight to His Sacred Heart, it arms our Friend and our Judge against us: because He has taken the reputation of each one on Himself, according to His own words, "*Whatsoever you do to them you do to Me.*"

But how peaceful will be the death of one who has never allowed herself to judge, or say an unkind word! She will find at her judgment the Sacred Heart to be an open tabernacle, where she will rest for ever.

CONSIDERATION.

On Humility.

There is a virtue which we must all strive after in our spiritual life, which we must all aim at in attaining perfection; and that is humility, for humility is sanctity.

What wonderful humility was that of St. Ignatius! this always strikes me when I read the second prelude of the Meditation on Hell, where he begs that if ever the love of our Lord grows cold and weak in his heart, at least the fear of Hell may keep him from sin.

Imagine this great Saint, so eminently a man of prayer, so holy, so mortified, in the depths of his humility, saying these words, "Grant me, O dear Lord, this grace, that if the thought of Thee, and of Thy love, or the sorrow for my own faults should not keep me, at least the fear of Hell should prevent me from falling into sin. I, who am so weak, so frail, I, who am so liable to temptation, I, who am so poor and miserable a being; let, at least, this thought keep me from offending Thee. *Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear.*" And what did all this mean? That he was deeply penetrated with a sense of his own weakness; he was truly humble, he felt he had need of all the spiritual help he could gain, so thoroughly penetrated was he with the sense of the absolute necessity he stood in, of the smallest and most trifling thing that could gain him grace from God.

Look at the ten Additions he composed to his

Spiritual Exercises, and these were for himself, long before he had any idea of others knowing about them; what thought, what care, what laborious study he gave to them! He entered upon his Retreat at Manresa, determined to be alone with God, and determined not to lose one of the graces he could gain, so deeply did he feel his own weakness, and his need of grace. This was true humility, lowly self-knowledge, self-abasement. And we, what do we do? Let us take our last Retreat; how did we keep the Additions then? Were we determined to prepare our meditation over-night, to let it be as he made it, the object of his thoughts till he fell asleep, and his first on waking? did we endeavour to keep our eyes cast down? or rather did we say, "Oh! well, I'll make this Retreat as well as I can; but there's no use having all this bother, all this fuss about it. I'll get through it all right, of course. I won't look about me"?

Now, all this speaks of self-sufficiency, of not knowing our own hearts, of the utter need we have of every little help. How different St. Ignatius! He so carefully prepared his meditation, thought of it till he went to sleep, again first thing in the morning; then, when his time for prayer came, how reverently he placed himself in the presence of God, how respectful was his posture, his whole mind was given to what he was doing! Do we ask ourselves every morning, in the depth of our own heart—Am I really striving after perfection, how do I stand with regard to humility? Are we not often careless about our preparation for meditation?

A master of prayer once said, that he found that when he spent some time in placing himself really and reverently in the presence of God, and fully realized His presence with him, the time afterwards spent in prayer, in speaking heart to heart with God, was of more value than if he had spent longer time in prayer, without being so careful about placing himself in His presence. St. Thomas gives us this consolation, that when once we have entered on our prayer respectfully and reverently in the Divine presence, the heart still continues to speak to God, the prayer of the heart still goes on in spite of the thousand and one distractions that come to our minds. Let us try earnestly to place ourselves in the presence of God; let us not think lightly of any means, however small, that may help us to obtain grace—this is true humility and lowliness of heart.

Then, again, our reception of the Sacraments, our confessions and Holy Communions, are they prepared for and received with that earnestness and reverence they deserve? or do they become mere routine? Our Office and vocal prayers, what of these? Do we prepare ourselves beforehand? do we endeavour, as far as lies in our power, to recite worthily the praises of God? do we attune our hearts to our words? do we remember that we are trusted by the Church to sing the Divine praises? do we reverentially and in meek lowliness of heart, recall to mind the presence of God, trying to associate ourselves in spirit with the angels?

Our beads, too; are we careless about them, getting through them anyhow—instead of respect-

fully preparing to say our Rosary, carefully reciting it, the more so as we know how careless we can be, and distracted during this time?

Let us go with a whole heart to each spiritual duty and let us examine each one through the day as it comes, and see what has been faulty in it and what we can amend. All this carelessness bespeaks a self-sufficiency, a want of humility, a want of reliance on God. Oh, if we only studied more deeply that great Saint, holy Ignatius, and saw him so careful about the minutest particular, because he knew and felt he could not afford to lose one single grace, however small! And are we better than he was?

We do not know ourselves, or we, too, should feel the absolute need in which we stand of every means of grace, and we should carefully treasure up and seize upon every opportunity of gaining it. We have need of it all, if we are to be what God means us to be, and if we are to perform our spiritual duties well, and keep united in heart to God, in spite of the crowds of distracting thoughts, that our work, laid on us by God, and undertaken for His greater glory, must entail upon us.

Let us enter into each detail with a whole heart and undivided mind; let us make use of every means God gives us, for what He intends them to be,—helps to bring us nearer to His Sacred Heart.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Hell.

1. St. Ignatius bids his sons never to omit giving the meditation on Hell, not even when only nuns are

in question. It will teach us the mercy and the love of God, besides instilling into our minds a holy fear; so that, if ever the day should come when our souls require a check, we may find one in the reflections we shall now make.

Those people go to Hell who never meditate on the eternal truths during life. We do not think that nuns go to Hell. No one ever falls all at once from a life of religious fidelity into mortal sin. A pagan poet says, "The steps to Hell are shallow." By little and by little, and slow degrees, the holiest persons have at last given up their vocation, renounced holy virginity, and deprived themselves of all those wonderful graces which God's liberality had once poured out on them.

2. Let us contemplate some of the torments of Hell. Take the five senses. Why, one shriek of terror, reaching the earth from thence, would, I suppose, be enough to freeze the blood in our veins. Then, think of the flames, the stench, the company of devils to scourge, torture, deride, and insult their miserable victims. And the hand of the damned soul still clutches, and will clutch for ever, that horrid, stinking, corruptible creature for which she gave up her eternal salvation!

3. Hell is the fruit of mortal sin. Yet, in one way, venial sin seems more audacious than mortal.

If a man cuts another's throat to gain a dukedom, at any rate he gets something for his crime—a duke is a duke, and honour and thousands come with the title. But the thing gained by venial sin is so small that, really, the only reason why we choose to

commit it seems to be the pleasure of offending God. God says, "Get up at five." We say, "No, I'll get up at a quarter past." God says, "Go upstairs." We say, "No, I'll go down." This indifference to venial sin, this deliberate infidelity, is the thing to be most dreaded.

God has given us efficacious helps to gain Heaven and avoid Hell; but we must take His grace when offered. God loves the Rule. Woe be to us if we slight its orders. God loves obedience. Woe be to us if we dare, I will not say disobey, but contemn things commanded us; depreciate their value, because, in our eyes, they seem so small. The voice of authority coming from any Superior's mouth is dear to Him, and must be esteemed and respected if we would merit the graces necessary for avoiding eternal torments, and the gaining of an eternal crown of reward.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Hath no man condemned thee?

St. John viii. 2—11.

1. Remark the alacrity with which the common folk follow our Lord, and hang on His words.

Make this practical by thinking of the joy our Lord has when He sees a Religious carry out these words: "God wishes me to trust Him and be happy." He turns in anger from one who doubts if He has forgiven her. Who *can* pierce His Heart with a more cruel dart than this?

The children of the Kingdom shall be cast out, and the outsiders fill their places! This is verified when Religious, by their distrust, are bidden to stay behind; while poor, ignorant folk, covered with heavy sins, may draw near to Him and receive pardon.

Consider the reverence shown by the Jews to the Temple. Do *we* show reverence to God by carefully preparing our meditations or any other work we are called upon to do for our Lord, and to which a little preparation would ensure success; or do we go slap-bang at it, trusting to get through it somehow when the moment comes?

Is not this forgetting our creatureship, forgetting who we are, and the Majesty of Him we serve? And, as *all* our work is for Him, these reflections apply to every action of our daily life. Did not the angels fall because they would not take the trouble to use the means God had placed at their disposal, by which to form a habit of virtue? A quiet, humble, painstaking, laborious preparation cannot be too highly estimated; it is a powerful means of causing reverence to spring up in our hearts, and making our works more agreeable in God's sight.

2. What a difference do we see between the crowd who were close to our Lord, drinking in His words, and the spirit of the Pharisees!

The latter were learned, proud, sceptical, arrogant. "This multitude is accursed, and knoweth not the law," they said. "Hath any of the rulers followed this Man?" They drag in the woman, only to use her as a means to induce our Lord either to contradict His own doctrine of mercy, or to condemn the law

of Moses. How doth the Divine Wisdom confound them, even on their own level! Yes; certainly condemn her, He says; but, let him who is without sin, cast the first stone at her. Old men were the accusers; it's a sad thing to see grey heads uncharitable. Do we ever "tempt God" by desiring a virtue, taking no means to acquire it; and justifying ourselves by our desires? These Pharisees forgot the memory of their own sins; and our Lord was obliged to show them those sins written on the ground. Then they shrank away like cowards, beginning with the eldest, who ought to have had the long memory of his sins green before his eyes. As long as we forget our sins, and are not covered with shame for them, we shall be ready to condemn others.

3. Look at this poor woman—a picture of what we are trying to learn. Her shame and contrition have made her a saint. If she knew anything of our Lord before this day she must have had hope when brought before Him. What ought we then to hope, when we know we are to be judged by Him?

If she did *not* know Him—perhaps she thought He was ready to condemn her, like the cruel Pharisees. If *we* think that, it shows that we do not know Him. Look at the picture—the crowd standing back, wondering why the Pharisees had gone out; the woman alone before our Lord. It was with her, just as it is with us after Holy Communion;—face to face with Him. He asked her, "*Where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?*" Then came her trembling answer, "*No man, Lord!*"

See the merciful love of our Lord. "*Neither will I condemn thee; go, and now sin no more!*"

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Kingdom of Christ.

1. Now comes the call of Christ, not to choose our vocation; but to choose such means as will make us persevere, and be good soldiers in His cause.

To nearly every one, during their annual Retreat, comes at one time or another, some special light or grace from God,—something for their guidance; or it may be that He asks for something, and upon their correspondence with this, depends in a great measure their spiritual life during the coming year. This meditation should therefore be made to beg for light, and for grace to listen to His whisper, with a ready ear and willing heart.

Imagine the young man in the Gospel, on whom our Lord looked with love, but who, nevertheless, was faithless to the call. Never contemplate him without thanking God for being where you are. The grace was great which enabled you to accept the offer, and carry out your purpose. Joy in a vocation crucifying to nature—this is what God's grace *can* and *has* accomplished. You must own that, imperfect as you still are, grace has done much for you; and be confident that in the future it will do still more if you will only co-operate.

2. The one thing which brings us to God, and reduces spirituality into a nutshell, is going against self. People do not like this; they want something with more wool round it. This strikes too hard at the soft part of our nature. But if they do not try

to live a life of going against self, you may be sure that in those souls our Lord is only coming off second best.

3. These words "going against self," which Père Olivaint studied day by day, year by year, from one Retreat to another, made this holy man a martyr. During the thirty days' Retreat, which he made in prison, he had the following vision. As the Father was about to make his act of consecration and entire oblation, our Lord Jesus Christ said to him: "Before you make your offering to Me, I will make Mine to you." It is the same Lord who now makes His offering to each one among you. If you will only meditate upon His life, you will find it is all meant for you; by His actions, words, and labours, He gives you the example—the strength—to remain steadfast to Him in all the difficulties of life.

CONSIDERATION.

On Peace.

God is peace. If there were no God, no conscience, we are apt to imagine we should have no conflict, and should be at peace; whereas, our disquiet comes from the wretched self within us, and self would then be more unquiet than ever. Blessed are those souls who fully see and recognize the hatefulness of the self within them.

To "empty oneself of self," to "renounce all pleasure," mean very different things for different people. There are two ways of taking pleasure—greedily, as a cow eats grass—or delicately, knowing

that I am not worthy of it, that too much would not be good for me, renouncing self interiorly even while thanking God for the pleasure.

There are infinite degrees in the line of self-renunciation; between the first dawning idea of self-denial in the soul, and the crucified saint, like St. John of the Cross, or St. Teresa.

"The love of Jesus makes a man despise himself," says the *Imitation;* and there is not a more useful line in it. If we apply this test to our acts of the love of God, we shall soon see how much solidity there is in them. God has created us, and His glory lies in raising this poor vile nature of ours, till it is able to be absorbed by Himself in eternity. He first gives graces; then, when He thinks these have produced sufficient courage to bear it, He sends light, and shows the soul something of its own vileness.

Of every sin even, we may say, "Thank God." God has permitted the sins. He has borne the intense pain they have caused Him, has in a manner willed them, because, otherwise, we should not have known either His tender love for us, or our own utter unworthiness of His love, and our own loathsomeness. Our souls are like sponges, always seeking after God, but always drawing in too in their efforts many nasty things which disagree with them, and cost them much pain to get rid of.

Humility is only another name for sanctity.

All discouragement comes from *pride.* Failure has nothing to do with pleasing God. If God had so willed, He could have given St. Teresa the victory at first, which she spent twenty years in trying and

failing to attain ; and yet, at the end of these twenty years, spent in failure, she was a great Saint. The gift to St. Aloysius of perfect fidelity to grace, was a most unusual one, and one given to him as the special patron of priests and young men, as the model of chastity. A soul who fails and makes her act of contrition twenty times in the day, will probably have given God more glory, and done more for Him, than one who has gone quietly on all day without failure; and for some people, it is true to say, that God created them to serve Him *by failure ;* for they give Him glory by their acts of contrition and humiliation ; while if they had succeeded, their pride would have made them displeasing to Him.

A great want in our lives is the spirit of gratitude. I reverently believe most firmly the words of St. Austin : " Gratitude is the substance of religious life." God is so good ; everything that happens, everything which He either sends or permits, is for our good, and a true subject of gratitude ; if we do not see it now, we shall when we come to die.

Whenever a thought of sadness occurs to you, ask yourself, what is self-love doing here ? what is the love of the interests of the Sacred Heart doing ? Then the sadness will not find the sympathy it has hitherto found. All sorrow for graces abused which come from God, from true contrition, is peaceful and happy ; it only wonders at God's goodness to it, after treating Him so badly. Sorrow from wounded self-love says : " I might have been so different if I had not abused those graces, I might have been so high in the spiritual life, instead of being only just at the very

bottom of the ladder." It is all *self*, little or no thought of *God's* honour, of *God's* glory. For the future, then, true gratitude; and, in consequence, true peace. Suffer our Lord to fulfil His words: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Incarnation.

St. Luke i. 26—38.

1. For this mystery a composition of place is most important; and if we try to look at the picture, and study its every detail, we must learn many useful and wholesome lessons.

We may imagine the council of the Blessed Trinity looking on the little world beneath, wallowing in every kind of sin. The moment has arrived for the accomplishment of the great work of our redemption. Picture to yourself the great Archangel Gabriel, in all the glory of his wondrous beauty, summoned before the throne of the Divinity, and, with bowed head, listening to the marvellous embassy on which he was to be sent. Then, as he sped on his way, through the serried ranks of the heavenly hierarchy, with what loving, reverent interest they regarded him!

Again picture to yourself our Blessed Lady's little cottage at Nazareth, all in peace, tranquillity, and order. See that lowly maiden, study her minutest features, as she comes before us for the first time in our Retreat; and let us beg of her to help us; we who are her children may feel secure

in approaching our Lord through her. She is *never* angry, she only grieves.

She never punishes; and no matter how wicked, bad, perverse, ungrateful we have been, she is still our Mother; and once her love has been poured out upon us, it is never withdrawn; she never denies our claim, but ever looks upon us with loving compassion. There is no misery she cannot reach, no wound she cannot heal; and if we cling to her robe, and ask her to take our hand in hers, and so lead us to her Divine Son, we shall be sure of our welcome from Him.

2. When the Angel said to her, "Thou shalt conceive," she thought of her consecration to perpetual virginity. Tradition says, it was from some idea of the God-Man: and she, in her lowliness, wished to devote herself as handmaiden to wait upon the mother of her God. We listen to her words, "How shall this be done?" not questioning the Divine Power, but in wonder at this ineffable mystery. Then, as St. Gabriel foretells how all shall be accomplished, the wonderful *fiat* was spoken, that watchword of all the good that has ever been done in this world, that token of perfect submission to the Divine Will, in all things, that entire obedience which God expects from us, and to which He promises victories, and of which He will never ask an account, or, rather, He will never judge actions done by it. We may be sure the first lesson He would give us in His human life would be one of the utmost importance, so we should study its every detail.

3. When that *fiat* was uttered, the angels looked on in wondering adoration; the moment had arrived which they had longed for; the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity spread His wings, and swept down from His eternal throne, and brooded over His humble spouse. Then the God-Man was formed; and the Sacred Heart gave Its first palpitation, and the ineffable mystery of mysteries was accomplished! But, no words can picture it, no thought can realize it; we can only kneel in humble adoration, to thank God for it, and ask Him to teach us its lesson.

There is great power and efficacy in the words of Holy Scripture. As virtue went forth to the poor woman in the Gospel, from merely touching the hem of our Lord's garment, so we may look to receive grace and help from hearing, repeating, or meditating on these divinely inspired words. How often we say "*Et Verbum Caro factum est*" without thinking of all they mean; and yet we always do get grace from them.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Nativity.

St. Luke ii. 1—20.

1. Let us picture to ourselves St. Joseph bringing in the message that they are to leave for Bethlehem. There is no complaint from him or his blessed spouse! and, yet, what could have been more inconvenient than such an order? This was the going against self, about which we have been meditating. God did not spare Mary in things that

went against her—from her He wanted the very aroma of sacrifice; she must overcome the most sensible repugnances of nature. Happy the souls whom God can trust! He does not spare them either.

2. The long journey is accomplished without even the ordinary comforts; but there was no repining. St. Joseph was our Lady's superior. We should learn not to grumble, not to give expression to our bad temper under the pretence of being candid.

Let us go with them as they are turned away from the inn, and watch them as they look into the poor, empty cave—too poor for *any one else;* and we can learn a first principle of common life—to take what nobody else wants, and be pleased to take it.

3. Some among you begin, perhaps, to realize that God's providence is a real thing. Those who see His will in all the events of life, and inwardly bless His Holy Name, make each act a continual prayer.

Let us exult with our Blessed Lady in her joy at pressing Jesus to her breast. Ask her to give joy to you by making you feel you possess Jesus as she did then, and that you value your treasure. Unselfishness alone is capable of exquisite joy. Sadness, selfishness, and dumps—three names for the same thing—can make us count up our woes unceasingly and untiringly. It does no good to be thinking of past sufferings, better to forget them altogether; thus, self-forgetting, we can stretch out our hands to God, happy and thankful that we are still able to labour for Him

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Circumcision.

St. Luke ii. 21.

1. Your meditation is on the mystery of the Circumcision, and when you have formed your composition of place, I want you to pray for a special light, for grace to see the beginnings of temptations. It is our ignorance of the *roots* of temptations, from which so much sadness and unhappiness spring; and let those young in Religion pray especially that this light may enable them to see the reason of so many failures, and so much loss of peace of soul during our year's work.

The old soldiers know how to fight, and nerve themselves, and can more easily overcome their difficulties. They are old hands at it, and can very soon see whence this disorder or that arises; but if we make our Retreat well, if there is an earnest desire to know ourselves, and, by God's grace, a desire to see our faults, if we sincerely beg light from God, God always responds to that cry, and we do come to see and understand the cause of our falls.

Pray for light, then, to detect the beginnings of temptations which, if neglected, become afterwards great *passions*.

For your composition of place see our Lord lying so helpless in the hands of His own creatures —so true a picture of what we ought to be when we enter Religion; that spirit of childlike inability to resist, submissive to the least command; and happy are we, if we are able to retain this through all our

community life, for this spirit tends to make our life in Religion very happy.

2. Dwell on this great thought, and see if our Lord looks as if He were taking care of Himself, and of His own interest. See that He is helpless, bound by His swaddling-clothes, in order to teach us and to be an example to us.

Look at the person of St. Joseph. He is the head of the family, called by God to that charge; and, now, the act of causing pain devolves on him; he is suffering from this duty of giving pain. You all have, more or less, from time to time, to give commands, orders, and, perhaps, pain to others—those who are Superiors have to do it often—*how* do we do it? Is it without the sense of responsibility so great a power entails, and that, as it has been entrusted to us only in God's name, therefore only by His power ought we to use it.

We are all more or less called upon at times to exercise this power over others—and we may be even more so—for sometimes God chooses the most weak, and not the most powerful ones of this world to do His work; and great things are done in Religion by those who are the most childlike and most submissive; His spirit is never wanting to those who trust in Him and not in their own strength.

3. There are two lessons to be learnt from the two persons before us,—St. Joseph and our dear Lady.

St. Joseph is strengthening himself with the thought of fulfilling the law, and the sense of his obedience to the duty God has called on him to perform.

Then our Lady; let us fix our eyes on her, as

she sees her darling Son undergo this pain. What are our thoughts when the cross comes? We have not trained ourselves to bear pain, and to look forward to it, so that when this comes it almost crushes us with its weight; we who are old in Religion little think of the pain we cause to young hearts who are not schooled as ourselves in bearing pain and trial; therefore we do not consider how keenly these young hearts feel the humiliation or pain we are causing them.

How terribly are the pains of childhood overlooked! Yet they are much more keen, and more painfully felt than those suffered by souls in the world, hardened, I may say, by continued sorrows and trials. Even in Religion we may usefully meditate on that kind of foolish thoughtlessness which gives pain, and causes such keen suffering in young hearts.

But look at our Lady feeling this bitter, this most humiliating order of the law; it is not herself, but the Child who is going to suffer; our eyes should be principally fixed on the heart of Mary, her disposition should be our study.

She knew the law that the Child should be circumcised, she knew also who the Child was; there may have been the gradually growing hopes that she would hear St. Joseph say, "It is not the law for Him;" but the time comes nearer and nearer, and her heart is fixed like a rock on the Eternal Wisdom. Would the thought come again, "It is not needed, it may do harm," and they are going to brand Him with shame; why degrade before mankind Him who is to be the teacher of Israel? This is what nature

would say; but our Lady was taught in a higher school. Our Lord is not going to give Himself an exemption from the law. You know how, when an order comes that mortifies self-love, the thought rises up, that there might have been a delay; I might have been warned. Oh! if we had been in her place, what should we have done? Alas! what have we done in moments something like these? With us, things manage to lie dormant in the heart, and accumulate because they are not noticed.

I want you to see our Lady at this very time, when our minds would have been open to all these wrong judgments; she in all this pain was calm, tranquil, and happy. Our Lady has called you in Religion to a large share in the chalice of her Divine Son, and you should seek to carry the Cross in peace and joy like her. Again I want you to see the danger in our overlooking our exceeding need of light, which prevents us from seeing the *roots* of our faults.

When the time of temptation comes, we should be most careful to put away the beginning of all judgments, to yield ourselves submissively into the hands of Superiors, and carefully get rid of the pain of yesterday, before we face the troubles of to-day. The reason we fall seriously is, because we give way to those growing suspicions which, little by little, diminish our confidence in the providence of Superiors, and also in the providence of God, lessening our strength for the time when temptation is the strongest. Pray for prudence to detect those dormant temptations, which are the real torments and dangers of the religious soul.

CONSIDERATION.

On Religious Life.

Too much work has a tendency to keep down a high theory of religious life; and a low theory is to be content to keep God's commandments, and rather to sneer at those who aim higher; and people with their low theory drag down others to their level, particularly those in temptation.

What sort of comfort will this be on our death-beds? When we see this low theory carried out during a lifetime, we understand how Religious can be in Purgatory to the end of the world. St. Vincent Ferrer, having said thirty Masses for his sister, was told he had done well, as now she would not be in Purgatory quite so many years; she was a nun.

A middle theory is embraced by those who mean to keep rule, but still to take care of number one. They regard all higher aims as sentimental. Their conversation, though never so entirely pernicious as those who hold the low theory, is, nevertheless, passively so. They have no comfort in prayer, because they are not real with God; they say they are practical, and their work serves them for endless excuses. They cannot pray, because meditation shows them faults they will not give up. Confession is a burden to them; they are rude to those who are rude, will not bear rebukes, and are ripe for a fall when humiliation or great temptation comes in their way.

The high theory is followed by those who are indifferent to creatures, and give themselves up without reserve to the will of God; who embrace all the best and highest practices of religious life, as a means to lead them to perfection: they may often fall to lower things; choose a gratification, instead of a sacrifice of self in a weak moment, but they rise again, and tell God they are heartily sorry. Their prayer is real, because they have something to say; their service of God is hearty, because they do not degenerate from the high thoughts of the sons of God; and they secure the hundred-fold in this life of peace, and relish of the service of God.

We may go on to consider what may be called—the eight beatitudes of a community life.

1. Blessed are those who have no possessions, or, in other words, are not attached to anything; who let Superiors do as they like with them. Just as an act of perfect abandonment of oneself to the hands of God is the best preparation for death; so to live in holy poverty, with perfect abandonment of self to the hands of Superiors, is the best disposition to be ready and happy at the hour of death.

2. Blessed are those who love to be unknown, forgotten, hidden in the community.

3. Blessed are those who overlook the faults of others, remembering how liable they are to fail themselves.

4. Blessed are those who faithfully observe each community duty. This obtains for us familiar companionship with Jesus, who shares all our joys and sorrows, gives us all the counsel we need, and so

often during the day assembles us round the tabernacle, to heap upon us all the favours His love has prepared for us.

5. Blessed are those who do not judge others, remembering that they are often wrong in their opinions, and seldom without sin, in hard judgments.

6. Blessed are those who avoid familiarity, or particular friendships.

7. Blessed are the obedient; for they partake in all the merit of the community life, which gives to each daily duty a golden value.

8. Blessed are those who never give way to those imaginations which make us think our appointed charge is unwisely chosen; and that if our Superior had spent five minutes in prayer to the Holy Ghost, it would have been changed.

These will be the blessings that will fall on those who aim at the perfect fulfilment of each duty, who try to walk in God's presence, and fulfil the service of praise and reverence.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Wise Men.

St. Matt. ii. 1—12.

1. The Magi were wise men—Holy Scripture tells us so. They did not count upon receiving inspirations all their lives long, and doing their work only under their influence. As soon as they saw the star disappear, they set themselves to use their common

sense; they asked their way, they never dreamt of returning home; when they found themselves in doubt, without a guide, they instantly began to try to find out for themselves what their course was to be; and it was no pleasant task either, to inquire in the city of a proud, suspicious, aspiring monarch for Him who was born "King" of the Jews! Nothing but great simplicity of purpose could have got them through. God expects us to use our common sense, that is, to employ our natural faculties. All His gifts, natural as well as supernatural, must be turned to account, if we would correspond to His designs. Both must be gems in our future crown. God does not intend us to cast away plain sense, and live in the moon. It is no use bowing down under the will of God, and adoring His inscrutable designs, when troubles are there, and neglecting to use our common sense. Every Religious should become a thoroughly useful, good, and trustworthy member of her Institute. Every gift He has given, natural judgment as well as anything else, He expects to be employed in His service. Some have failed during the past year, by trusting too much to the useful natural gifts they felt they possessed; others, by trusting entirely to their docility towards Superiors, and renouncing all judgment and ability of their own. Find out by advice which is your tendency, and profit by the light received.

How many times we have missed finding Jesus, because we would not use our natural gifts in searching for Him! God sometimes sends a "star," a confessor, a Superior, and light and courage come along with it,

Suddenly the star goes—what must we do? why, set ourselves to work, help ourselves, of course. We must bring our imaginations down, be glad of the natural means God places at our disposal, and not think He intends, or is bound, to send us stars at every moment of our life. Robust common sense makes robust sensible Religious; and you may depend on God's help being found in the very things, natural though they be, which you take up, and use for His glory.

2. Common sense, again, would make you get rid of "self," in your external work: the more of self is in it the less of God will be there. It is the same as for the interior—self pushes out God; how many do things worse than they would, if their imagination had not surrounded the object with unreal terrors! Now, does not the story of the Magi teach you the necessity of keeping to rules, if you want to succeed? You must not expect to become perfect in any charge, much less perfect Religious, by pure illumination.

3. Once in the presence of Jesus, the Magi bowed down in lowliest submission; they were no longer serpents, but doves. No longer the keen sensible men, cautiously inquiring their way: but men, imbued with the child-like spirit of the creature adoring the Creator, and that under the humble form of a little Child. Let us learn from them that the very highest thing we can give to God is submission of our judgment, which is the cream of obedience.

See the gifts that we must offer to our Lord in

His cradle. Gold must figure kindness to others; frankincense, keeping our Lord in memory; and myrrh, mortification. The Magi also teach us not to be signposts, exhorting others, and pointing out to them the way, and remaining stationary ourselves.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Hidden Life.

St. Luke ii. 51, 52.

1. During those eighteen years, all the history of our Lord's life is told in these few words, "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them."

We know they were spent at Nazareth, so we can picture the little cottage and workshop,—that cottage at which the angels gaze with loving awe and wonder, and from which ascends to God a purer, holier worship than from the whole of creation.

The manner of our Lord's life is not told; but we can gather it from the words of St. Mark. When our Lord began to preach at Nazareth, the people said, "How can this Man teach, when He knows not letters?" So we may presume that He lived so ordinary a life amongst His neighbours, that they did not suspect Him to be anything different from themselves. We can't imagine Him saying, "Oh, I don't care for this sort of thing; but I have to do it because it is My Father's will." Not at all. He did all He had to do thoroughly and earnestly, quietly and unostentatiously. As He advanced in

strength, He helped our Lady in her household cares, or stood at St. Joseph's knee to learn from him mysteries of his craft, how to fashion the things He Himself had made! But how was all this done? So simply, so perfectly, so quietly, that no one suspected Him to be other than one of themselves.

2. And this is the grand lesson we should learn from the Hidden Life. This it is that has fashioned thousands of saints who are not on the altars of the Church, and the thousands who are canonized.

To be so completely one of the community, to be so thoroughly merged into it, as not to be noticed, not to be remarkable for any perfection; to dread notice, praise, esteem, applause, high offices, approval, popularity, anything that may in the least degree distinguish us from others—*this* is what we should learn.

In a community, different members are sometimes named and praised; of others it is said: "Oh, they are nothing in particular, they are very good, there is no fault to find with them." Most likely these are the perfect ones, who have found the precious pearl of the Gospel, and have sold all to find it. Such as these are never late, but not always singularly the first: they are always cheerful and cordial; but not boisterous and noisy: they are always at hand, as if by accident, whenever good is to be done, or any charitable act to be performed, or any extra work to be got through; their piety is deep and solid, but no one can observe any peculiarity in their devotion; they are exact to the smallest point of rule, but it is all so much a matter of course, that

it is not observable; they are mortified, but practise no extra mortifications which would draw attention. Ever contented with what they receive with regard to food, clothing, charges, obediences, they ask for nothing, and refuse nothing; they are perfect in *little* things. Their passion is love of abjection, love of being passed over, dread of notice or singularity.

3. Many begin to lead this life attracted by its beauty and loveliness, but few persevere in it, because it is difficult: extremely so—for it is death to nature, death to self, and to our most innate cravings.

It is possible, and, indeed, it is worth striving for. God never yet asked us to do anything for which He did not give us the grace. Let us ask it earnestly and humbly. Let no discouraging thoughts of the past weigh us down, live in the present only. I feel I can say no more: words cannot express all I want to say about the Hidden Life; but I leave it to God to do it for me.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Baptism of our Lord.

St. Matt. iii. 13—17.

1. Now had come the time for Mary to part from her Son. There was an end to their long, happy, peaceful, hidden life. She knew the bitter time had come when He would be no longer hers: and she said, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." That watchword of her life made her so dear to God.

She felt the keen bitterness of the pain of parting; but she did it bravely, generously, and entirely, to teach those who have tender hearts that the most perfect detachment and resignation are compatible with the strongest natural affection; and that, bitter though the pang be to part with those for whom God has implanted in our hearts the strongest natural affection, it is compatible with the purest love of God and devotion to His service.

2. Our Lord mingles with the crowd. He shows how truly He had become one of us. He waits His turn. Oh, what a lesson for us! If we are kept waiting, even a few minutes, what a trial! How we say, "No one has any consideration for my time; it is so important; my office is such a particular one!" Yes; He waits His turn, and then kneels down to be baptized by St. John the Baptist.

No wonder the Saint was astonished, and said, "How is this? *Thou comest to be baptized by me!*" And our Lord answered, "*Suffer it to be so now.*" He wished to teach us a great and most important lesson.

It is the first lesson of His public life, and the same lesson He is so fond of repeating under so many different forms—the lesson of self-abnegation and humiliation, the lesson of acknowledging our true position as sinners.

3. He submitted to the baptism for the remission of sins, because He had taken upon Himself our sins; and so He submitted to this public humiliation to teach us this great lesson. No great work can be undertaken for the glory of God, unless

self-humiliation be the chief foundation-stone. An act of humiliation is never lost; and this was how He began His wonderful work for souls. Therefore we can never say that any public humiliation, even before those of whom we have charge, can be any detriment to our work for God—He will take care of that.

Now, let us see that lowly Form kneeling in the Jordan in the abasement of its utter humiliation; the sight is so pleasing to God, and such joy to the heavenly court, that it bursts the heavens! The Holy Ghost descends upon that prostrate Figure, and a voice from Heaven is heard: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. *Hear ye Him.*"

So, when we want to please God and cause joy in Heaven, let us practise humility, let us embrace self-humiliation—this is what God cannot resist.

CONSIDERATION.

Devotion to our Blessed Lady.

Devotion to our Lady should be one of our sweetest helps and greatest consolations in our spiritual life; all can practise it, even the world steeped in sin, how much more those who are striving after perfection! It is a devotion that brings its own joy and comfort; there is no bitterness, no sadness n it; there is nothing stern or rough in it; and, while it appeals to our hearts, it touches our consciences with a most delicate finger.

But it must be practical, real and solid, and *industry* can make it so; we can become true children of our dear Lady by industriously striving to be so, by dwelling upon her in the manner we have tried to do during the meditations, so that, when her figure appears in our meditations during the year, we can say, "Oh, now I can do something; to-morrow morning our Lady will be there; she will help me." We can think of her as being so exquisitely beautiful and perfect in every way; for what gift of perfection would God refuse to her who was to be the Mother of His Son; or what would the Holy Ghost miss out from the decorations with which He would adorn the bridal chamber wherein He was to accomplish the great mystery of the Incarnation?

So, when we see any beauty or excellence anywhere, or admire any virtue or grace in our Patron Saints, or in any of God's chosen ones, let us think how much more perfectly our dear Lady possesses this gift, with how much more brilliancy it shines forth in her. Thus we shall form a habit of referring all to her, and comparing all with her, and striving to become more like her.

Think of her service of praise: we cannot imagine her sitting down in the dumps, and moping over her trials; consider her freedom from blaming others, which helped her service of praise, then her brightness, her constant serenity; when sorrow and affliction came to her, she was not cast down, she bore up bravely: so should we, too: we should learn to live a trouble down. If we make a grave mistake, or fall

into some grave fault, if our Superior's confidence in us is shaken, if we lose that prestige so necessary to help us in our work, we will live it down.

It has happened, it can't be helped now; but do not sit down and lament, and mourn, and so waste time; be up and doing, and *live it down.* There is no mistake so grave, no fall so great, that we cannot live it down, if we only *will.*

Then her activity; her piety was practical and charitable as we see: let us imitate her, like the bee, busy and ingenious in finding good work, doing the right thing at the right time, and in the right way,—not fussily, or taking pride in our activity, wisely active, not wasting strength, and always with the one end in view—God's glory and our salvation.

Consider her modesty, her gentleness, her perfect self-control, her quiet, calm, and dignified demeanour. We may all learn from this, and begin even now to form ourselves on it; if we have been frivolous in Religion, we shall be so no longer, with Mary's help we will overcome ourselves. "The saints are always polite," and we can learn from her lessons of courtesy and deference to others, that will free us from awkwardness or foolish shyness, and that self-consciousness which is ever in us.

She will cover us with the mantle of her gentleness. Let us not be afraid to approach her, and ask her help; she is anxious to help us. St. Stanislaus used to say, *Mater Dei, Mater mei;* and he felt strong in the thought that she was powerful and loved him.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Marriage of Cana.

St. John ii. 1—11.

1. "There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus also was invited."

So it is our Lord's will that Holy Scripture should mention the Mother's name before His own. We will look at the picture of this simple marriage-feast. The bride and bridegroom were simple, humble folk, or else our Lord would not have been there—the marriage-feast is prepared, and the table decked with some kind of rustic festivity,—no luxury. Then our Divine Lord Himself, all kindness and condescension. We see in His familiar intercourse with His Apostles an example of the esteem we ought to have for our community; not allowing ourselves to see their faults, or blunders, or awkward mistakes; but to have our eyes fixed on their virtues, and our Lord's own esteem and love for them. Our Lady and our Lord are models for us at recreation, which is such a difficult duty; and our faults there proceed from want of preparation. Religious modesty, with a charitable observation of the wants of others, is our Lady's own gift, which she will bestow on those who love her. It is owing to our own bad humour that we find others disagreeable at recreation. Our duty is to contribute to the happiness of others, not to expect them to amuse us.

2. Do not tire of studying our Blessed Lady; always be glad when you meet her in your medita-

tion; salute her with an *Ave;* she teaches us always. What motives had she in coming to this feast? were they not that she might add to the joy of others, to pay attention to the forms of civilized life? to make intercession "for us sinners"? How attentive she is to the wants of others! The rules of the refectory are observed; she sees, but does not look; do you know the difference? We see some one passing, and give way to curiosity: where are they going? what are they going for? That is looking; but to see that some one wants a kind service, or a kind word, or that I am better out of the way,—this is seeing as our Lady saw. Then she turns to our Lord. He knew what was coming. "*They have no wine.*" What perfect confidence she had that her prayer would be granted, although our Lord seemed to refuse her! Our Lord acted thus to show that He could not resist His Mother's prayers. "*My hour has not yet come.*" Yet our Blessed Lady says to the waiters, "*Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.*"

3. The Queen of Heaven and of the Sacred Heart asks and doubts not. She *trusts* His love; and does He not love us? All that she asks for her clients must be granted. *Omnipotens supplex,* for she is prayerfully omnipotent; He, because He is God; she, because she is His Mother. At her simple statement of the wants of her host (her charity saw it), the hour appointed from all eternity for the Divine Mission to begin was anticipated. Study this prayer as a model, simply three words, "*Vinum non habent.*"

Holy writers have commented upon the manner of the waiters filling the water-pots "up to the

brim." They fulfilled the Divine order, promptly, willingly, perfectly, cheerfully. Then the chief steward of the feast marvelled at the unusual action of Jesus in keeping the good wine to the last. Thus the world acts, promising us joys and pleasures; and when we have satiated ourselves with them, we find their utter worthlessness. But our dear Lord acts differently. Religious life, and the struggle for self-conquest, may seem so bitter at first; but as time goes on, as the end draws nearer, we see more clearly, we find His peace. "*My peace I leave to you, My peace I give to you, not as the world giveth do I give unto you.*" We taste the sweetness of that wine which flows to us from the Sacred Heart.

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

By the Well of Samaria.

St. John iv. 5—29.

1. Here you have a passage from our Lord's life very full of instruction. It contains a beautiful doctrine, and there is plenty of subject for a long meditation, with many points; but each one must choose the points most useful to her.

Make your composition of place with great care. Our Lord, weary with His journey, is seated by the well; here is your composition of place. Look at our Lord expecting that soul, whom it has been decreed from all eternity He should meet at that particular time, in that particular spot; and He is waiting to speak to her.

He is worn out, though not tired; He is fatigued with travel. That word "fatigue" has very different meanings, according to the differences of our disposition. If we do not turn it to the best account when it comes, it is easy to use it badly, and it is very often a great excuse for self-indulgence. When fatigued, it is very easy to let nature escape; indeed, it is difficult not to do so. We see our Lord worn out with travel, fatigued, but not tired; no selfishness about Him. He watches for that soul, still full of energy—not overcome by His weariness—still fresh and vigorous.

Ask for grace to understand our Lord better, and all His ways and dealings with our souls,—His patience and constant love—ask to be able to recognize His great love, under all the trials He may send—for He only sends them as means to great graces—ask for that abiding faith, which enables us to understand all His efforts to do us good.

He often asks something of us, only as a way to bestow great graces on us in return; but with our little weak faith, we do not understand His ways, and we hesitate, or perhaps refuse what He asks. He asked a favour of the Samaritan woman: "*Give Me to drink;*" but only as a means of pouring grace into her soul.

2. When He does ask something at our hands, what a pity it is to refuse the grace! This woman is a true picture of ourselves, with our want of understanding, our doubts, our non-apprehension of the supernatural. She only understood His words in the natural and material sense; and when He asked

her to give Him to drink, she was scandalized, and reminded Him that His nation did not hold communication with hers; that she belonged to a despised people. He, however, intent on gaining her soul, said: "*If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.*" Meditate on this living water, this Divine grace which He gives so freely. She replies: "*Whence then hast Thou this living water?*" If we would understand our Lord, we must leave the things of earth, and turn our minds to the supernatural. When it is a question of our making a sacrifice for God, which He is asking from us, we hesitate, looking with one eye on the supernatural view, while the other is taking in the cost to ourselves; and so we go on bargaining and dallying with God.

3. Then Jesus said to her: "*Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*" The woman answered: "*I have no husband.*" Jesus said to her: "*Thou hast said well, I have no husband. For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.*" Then she was struck by His words, and saw that He knew all things. And when our Lord has made this impression, He goes on to teach and instruct her; and we see in this example, how our Lord prepares our souls to receive grace by compunction and humiliation, for He first leads her to acknowledge her guilt and feel its full shame, by finding our Lord knows all about her. Then, having prepared her soul by self-humiliation, He begins to

speak of true devotion. He teaches her adoration in spirit and truth. "*The hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth.*"

Oh! if we only had more clearly before us, how dear truth is to God, how He detests any tortuous, deceitful ways, how He abhors deceit of any sort! It is easy to settle into an unreal, untruthful groove, almost unconsciously. If we only gave half as much thought to aiming at simplicity of life, as we do to other things, we should advance quickly. If we could only learn to dread self-deception, we should have much more peace. Pray very much to understand our Lord's way. Watch carefully all His dealings with your souls; and beg for a lively conviction, to realize that whatever in His wisdom He does, is only done for our good.

If we dwell on material and natural things, it is so easy to misunderstand His ways; but we must raise our minds to the supernatural; and when He sends us humiliations, let us remember the Samaritan woman, and the great grace that was poured into her soul by means of the shame our Lord first brought upon her; for humiliation nearly always precedes some great grace.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Martha and Mary.

St. John xi. 1—45.

1. In this chapter of St. John we find one of those beautiful stories which portray our Lord's

dealings with different souls—a picture of His dealings with our own souls.

What is it that pleases and displeases Him? The one thing is to have real desire to listen to our consciences, and the truth will come—light comes quickly to those who are really seeking God. Many of the saints, in the earlier part of their lives, felt the desire of more perfectly knowing how to serve God. First came the desire of light, then the light, then the correspondence with the light.

We don't know what God is doing with others, and how foolish it is to occupy ourselves about others. Is there not a world for me with God only? and so, exactly with others. My world is different to theirs. I have nothing to do with them, and I must not intrude into a world I know nothing about. I must be so occupied, so full of our Lord, and He with me, and I know that He is to be *my all*. Now let us consider the persons, actions, and words as the story brings them before us.

Our Lord, with the Apostles round Him, and the message coming, and just exactly as we have seen before, the hearts are full of trust. "*Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick*,"—what unlimited confidence this brief prayer indicates!

Meditate on those most instructive words. And have we not a right to use them? Has He not shown us marks of His love in times past? and what delights Him most is the sure conviction of His love.

Has He ever done anything to prove His love? From the things that have happened, can I trace the designs of His loving care with regard to me?

Oh, if I could but lift my heart to utter that prayer as they did, I should, indeed, please Him, and force His Heart to grant what I need.

For the future what am I going to do with my temptations? In those times of trial, He is exercising the same Providence that He has done over me during my whole life; He seems not to have the interest that He really has.

He hides His affection from me. Let us see whether we can have the same trust, when we do not perceive the same visible signs of His love. The Apostles misinterpret the manner with which our Lord receives this message; they are constantly with Him; for three years they have been in His school learning His lessons; and yet they are so blind, and do not understand their Divine Master.

This explains to us our own timidity, our own cowardice. He is waiting for the time when we shall trust Him; when we shall believe; when, though we have been cowards so long, we shall be more constant and faithful in leaning upon Him. "He sleepeth, but His heart watcheth." He shows us exactly how we are led away from the supernatural view of things, and our eyes are closed, because we are so busy with outward works. Then, He speaks more plainly to the Apostles, and says, "*This sickness is not unto death;*" and even then their apprehension is very dim.

2. Consider the arrival at Bethania, and the two sisters, who represent the active life and the life of prayer. How He loves them both! How they are, and must be sisters; and if estranged, neither of them will be loved by Him.

The words of both are the same, identical with each other; and yet our Lord receives them differently. To Martha He utters a reproach, to Mary He says nothing. In this treatment of Martha and Mary we see how our Lord deals with each soul and each conscience. The same act displeases Him in one, and not in another. With one, He deals by sending consolation, then desolation—then, perhaps, there comes a fall; another, He seems to preserve in perfect innocence. He alone knows what is best for each. He seems to be more severe and exacting with one than another; but His love for each is equally real.

All this should teach us not to judge others, or question the different dealings of our Lord with their souls. And this very action of our Lord upon souls makes spiritual direction so difficult, and yet people who do not reflect cannot understand the great responsibility entailed on those who have to guide souls. Therefore, how careful we should be, not to be scandalized or to condemn others. What may seem a fault in one may be none, but arranged by God's dispensation of love. The soul that judges not grows fruitful in graces—they simply overflow. Our efforts ought to be thoroughly real, thoroughly earnest, by an entire devotion to our Lord. Let us look to God only, and not busy ourselves with others. I wish most earnestly that it could be possible to you to make *Him* enough for you. It seems as if He says, "Am I not enough for you, when you are enough for Me?"

What a source of endless distractions are these

thoughts and idle curiosities about others! How many sins we fall into from this cause! What multiplied temptations! Correspond with God's designs on your own soul; is it not time that you should put away all but Him? This is the life He called you unto, and this is the interior life you must combine with your exterior duties.

Here is the great question. Is He enough for me? Is He my all in all? or shall I cast Him away, while I delight myself in things in which He has no part, and with His enemies? "*Believest thou this?*" See the appeal He makes to you. Have you the abiding conviction of His love? Dwell much on those words, "*This sickness is not unto death,*" the way in which He teaches us Himself, that it is part of His providence over us, that we should be allowed to fall, for He watches to see whether we are prompt to rise.

The miracle is a type of sacramental absolution. See whether we regard with due esteem the wonderful effect of sacramental absolution, the wonderful beauty it always gives the soul.

Now, see the ghastly figure of the dead man,—a picture of the habits of sin: he is crippled, bound with a napkin, it is the speaking image of habitual sin—he is risen, but all trammelled by these fatal habits. What food for thought!

Try to realize that sense of God's own particular care of you whom He loves; and put away all unworthy pre-occupation about the faults and sins of others.

CONSIDERATION.

On Wisdom.

This word is out of fashion in the world. If we spoke of a wise woman, people would shrug their shoulders, and think we had gone mad. But Almighty God was pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom in preference to anything else; and gave him all things else together with it. These are some of its characteristic marks,—a distrust of self and of our own opinions, a dread of self-will, a desire of obedience, a modesty in maintaining our opinions, an avoidance of all exaggeration, no superlatives used, simple facts stated.

St. Teresa remarks, in one of her strong sayings, "If there were no self-will, there would be no Hell." Wisdom brings a right estimate of things, no undervaluing nor overstraining.

One of the characteristic marks of wisdom is, recognizing things at their right value; consequently, if we were wise, we should esteem "common life"—community life—at its priceless value. A life that, by the ordinary way, leads to the highest sanctity simple little souls that would otherwise scarcely attain to it by heroic efforts.

One of the commonest tricks of the devil is to try to lead us to do extraordinary things; and he would not dare to tempt in this way, only he knows God does so lead sometimes; but then, God only does this seldom, and with souls He has favoured with extraordinary graces.

There are three things we should most love and pay attention to in community life,—one is, to avoid all singularity, no matter how trifling; to love to be merged into the community, so that it suffices to be said of us, "Oh, she is one of the community;" to love to be unnoticed, unthought of, uncared for, our opinion not asked, to try to imitate all in their virtues, to be exact to the least duty, punctual to the slightest exercise, not remarkable for anything, in dress, or food, neither more neat and tidy than they are. This requires consummate sanctity, perfect virtue, because it is death to nature.

Then the second is a tolerant, charitable spirit towards one another, remembering that none are saints, at least consummate saints; they are saints in God's design, but not perfect saints, otherwise He would not leave them, He would take them to Heaven; but all are striving, and we must not be surprised at falls, remembering that God uses community life to cure us of our defects, to rub off the angularities of our characters; and no one can enter fully into the spirit of community life without becoming more amiable, gentle, forbearing, and patient.

The third is to avoid allowing the imagination to run riot; it carries us into all kinds of excesses, and is the bane of community life. It leads to rash judgment, and faults of that kind innumerable.

Think of the value of common life, think of the immense treasure of merits heaped up in one day by a religious community,—the prayers, the praise of God, acts of zeal, charity, poverty, obedience,

mortification; and that will make us appreciate our common life in our dear community; and, if we are faithful to this, we shall be truly wise, "wise unto salvation," for "*Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her.*"

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Agony in the Garden.

St. Luke xxii. 39—51.

1. The mission of Jesus Christ was to accept pain in His lower self as if it had sinned, and to offer perfect contrition for sin, by the destruction and crushing of His human nature in the Passion. Here, then, is the immolation of a sinless self, in order to accomplish the redemption of a guilty self. In Him there was no enmity between the higher and lower nature. Both had to be punished for God's honour and to give us an example. Now we have to fight along with Him as we saw in the Kingdom of Christ, sharing in the wounds as we hope to share in the rewards. Our Lord in His Passion has made adequate satisfaction, and given to us His act of perfect contrition.

Follow Him step by step, and see the immense reality of the pain and the deep love, from the Supper Room to Gethsemane down the hillside; the deepening gloom growing more and more dense; the distress and sad looks of the Apostles; the sadness of the Sacred Heart spreading itself over them—see the eight, and hear the words "*Stay you*

here;" and as He goes on, stop for a moment, and look upon the Apostles with their sinking hearts as they see Him receding from them; the dreadful desolation they feel when He is leaving them. Their only hope is in Him; their hope is wavering—they are scandalized at the weakness they had never seen before. He had always been their unutterable strength, and they could not fear because He was there. Now, in this hour when they saw Him yielding to sadness, what a terrible temptation it was to them to see Him like this—the sadness crushed their hearts!

2. We know it was for love of us that He allowed this weakness to come upon Him, more humiliating to Him than stripes or nails. See how perfectly He understood their fear, how intimately ashamed He was. This was His Father's will; it was not only exterior, but interior, so truly humiliating. He was sad to death, weary beyond measure, and His Soul was filled with fear.

Ah, could we enter into this interior Passion of the Man-God—to see Him weary, not with weariness of body, as when He sat by the well; but weary of His Father's will, weary of the work, weary of the desolation, weary of the pain. He who was so strong, so noble, that temptation should do this to Him, that it should make Him tremble with fear! How deep a shame, then, when He saw this reflected in the trembling Apostles, the deep sense of utter shame, and with what an extremity of desolation He went up that hillside saying, "*My Father, not My will but Thine be done.*" For us He endured this shame.

When we have to support others, where should we find our strength and our comfort, if not in the intimate union of our hearts with the Heart of our Lord? But yet, we have not reached the worst. He is still ascending the hillside; He is saturated with this bitter shame; He comes to His trial, to bear all that His Father sends Him; thus replenished with bitterness, no consolation, no element of courage, utterly deprived of any sensible feeling of love, He sees His Passion, sees it all pass before His eyes, sees what to-morrow is to bring. He tasted it, drop by drop, in all the anticipation of a clear picture,—the brutal rudeness of those on whom He had poured out such blessings.

He feels that keen pain which all noble natures must feel at being despised and execrated, loathed by the people He had loved so well. Enemy after enemy, judge after judge, the bitterness of injustice,—do you know what that means? He drank it to the dregs. The mockery of men, the foul jest, everything that is true, pure, noble, ingenuous, outraged; every refined and elevated feeling becomes for Him a new instrument of torture.

How unjust; how loathsome! Never can we understand with what exquisite accuracy the Sacred Heart was made for the capacity of suffering. So much for His feeling; His sense of justice; the noble beauty of His soul, saturated with pain and shame.

3. Then the dread of bodily suffering came on Him. His body was so formed that He might bear exquisite pain, by God's wondrous love for man;

and pain is allotted to us with the same Divine precision.

Every delicate nerve, every limb, was submitted to pain. Then, infinite love offered itself to pain, that we might be made a stranger to it for all eternity. Blows, thorns, the ghastly wounds of the nails, the tearing of the flesh, the remorseless stripes, the shameful nakedness, the overflowing of the chalice, the welling up, and the breaking of the Sacred Heart; and at a time when most weary, when most alone, and when all this could have been banished by one thought of the Beatific Vision still present with Him, that Vision was withheld by His Almighty Power from giving Him any consolation.

But all this is only a preparation for something more bitter, for to-morrow will bring the dread reality. Oh! He could have borne, even in His weakness, all this; but, what was worse than all, was the dreadful sense of His Father's anger, His cold aversion.

Can this be right? Yes: the foul accumulation of the sins of the whole world, by His own hearty acceptance, was imputed to Him. In purest justice, then, this imputation rests on Him. All the guilt He has to pay for. All the shame belongs to Him. All the sorrow that He has to pay, is not in name, not in estimation, but in plainest reality—the reality of His Father's justice, which must be repaid. He must bear it all—all this guilt.

We poor creatures try to understand the fetid badness in any single sin, or the immense guilt of a deliberate crime; but He, the Creator, sees it

all. He feels the intense badness, wickedness, guilt, as it rests on His pure Soul, the shame, the ignominy, which we *cannot bear*. Each kind of sin—it comes and claims Him for its victim; it is the real shame of sin undisguised, felt as only a soul of unspeakable purity could feel it. Your shame, and mine, and that of the whole world would He bear as if it were the only one He had to suffer for. He bore in His Soul each sin as if it belonged to Him. If we have one sin we are ashamed of, our souls are so little that we cannot distinguish between the malice of one and many; but He was saturated with the shame of all the world's sins. When thus sunk in this shame and ignominy He lifts those pure, kind eyes to His Father, offended by sin, and, by that act of perfect contrition, He makes atonement for the sins of all mankind—sins of pagans, sins so foul that they must not be named, sins of those who are called to the dignity of priesthood, of those called to Religion, of those who in after-times would be called to great graces, the sins of those who abuse God's gifts, defilement in the sanctuary, irreverence towards the Blessed Sacrament—all these inflicting on God's Heart such exquisite pain. All these outrages were atoned for; all were seen, and all were sorrowed for.

Let us try and ask in our degree for the perfect contrition that our Lord's Heart was capable of for a sorrow like this; and understand that, in all this great sea of iniquity, there was not one pain, not one sin, that was not perfectly sorrowed for; and God the Father was completely satisfied by the abundance

of His Son's atonement for sin. This, then, is what I want you to think of. How intensely He suffered! How immense His love! We never can be the same again if we see how adequate was His sorrow in that act of perfect contrition; and *that contrition* He has given to me.

Then let me try to unite my sorrow to His, and make *His sorrow mine;* and, if our sins were as great as the sea, then great should be our sorrow.

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On the Seven Last Words.

St. Luke xxiii. 34, 43, 46; *St. Matt.* xxvii. 43; *St. John* xix. 26, 27, 28, 30.

1. Let us form the composition of place, the three crosses on the gentle slope of Calvary, and then, clinging to our Lady's mantle, let us kneel at His Sacred Feet, hanging on the Cross for us. Let us see His Sacred Body agonized in all its members, and remember that the Cross was a rack on which He was stretched by nails, not cords; the distension of His members was fearful; let us see the groups of soldiers about, and beg Him to teach us the lesson He meant us to learn—that it was for *me*, to show His love for *me*, and to atone for my sins. If we could only get a true idea of the Cross, what a help it would be to us, what a friend we should find in the crucifix, how it would speak to us, and *listen* to us! The Church means it to be a great object of our devotion, by keeping it so constantly before us,

and, in Religion, we cannot, thank God, pass much time without seeing it; if we know how to use it rightly, what a help it will be! "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" This for the men who were so ruthlessly butchering Him; and not only them, but those who had ordered the awful deicide; how He clings to a mere shadow of an excuse! He loved the Jewish people, and so daily showered favours on them; and we are often attributing wrong motives, and blaming others. Do we ever hope He can find the same excuse for us? Then, turn to the two thieves, one joining the blasphemous crowd and jeering at Him, and the other, touched by the gentleness of the patient Sufferer, says only one little word, and that is instantly rewarded by a ray of light and faith that makes that prayer, "*Lord, remember me,*" spring forth, and this answered by so quick and so full a pardon, "*This day.*" Then look at our Lady, so full of agony, knowing she was about to lose Him, her only treasure. He, knowing how utter would be her desolation after His death, and wishing to give us an example of indifference, said, "*Woman, behold thy son;*" and from that hour, she adopted us all, and loved us with the plenitude of her mother's love, and then, turning to St. John, He gave him to her as a guardian: let us try to enter into the ecstasy of delight that filled St. John's heart at these words; and let us ask him to obtain for us some share in his devotion and love for our Lady.

2. When the waters of the most utter anguish flooded His Divine Soul, and He seemed utterly

abandoned, came that cry, "*My God! My God!*" Oh, what intense agony must have wrung it from Him, how deep and wide the ocean of complete desolation that enveloped Him, when left entirely alone, feeling the full weight of the shame and the anger of His Heavenly Father weighing upon Him for sin, for *my* sins, when He felt the crushing weight of the huge mountain of iniquity that was upon Him for sin, and in His thorough self-abasement was bereft of any comfort! How that cry has echoed through the world, and what lessons it has taught to souls abandoned to the uttermost aridity and desolation, that know not where to turn for comfort, that see around them nothing but the vast waste of the blackest desolation, and that in spite of their trust, their faith, their loyalty, cannot even say, "I dare love." Oh! let them raise their eyes to their dying Lord, to that failing Form, and hear His cry; it will give them strength to say at least, "I *desire* to love."

3. Now the fever is burning through every vein, His Blood is flowing in streams, and His lips are parched, "*I thirst;*" but how much more for souls! and now every possible atonement has been made for sin. Not a sin but has been marked in cruel punishment on His tender Body; all is done according to His Father's will, He gives one last look to His beloved Mother, His Head droops forward on His Breast, and saying, "*It is consummated,*" with a loud cry that broke His Heart, which gives the last throb, His Soul leaves His Body. "*Father, into Thy hands.*" Let us kneel at His feet in lowly self-abasement,

thank Him for His boundless love, and let us promise Him courageously, and generously, that we will do *whatever* He asks of us. How can we refuse Him anything, when He has done so much for us? Our resolutions will not cost us our life or our blood; they will not require us to be martyrs, but He asks for generous, loyal, loving hearts; let us offer ourselves *unreservedly* to Him; no reserves can we have; kneeling beneath the shadow of the Cross, yet wet with His Blood, can we refuse Him any sacrifice to prove our love?

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Resurrection.

St. Matt. xxvii. 62, 63.

1. *Limbo.* Our Lord's Soul went down to Limbo; all the good souls since Adam were there detained, as Heaven's gates had been closed by his fall.

Imagine what their waiting for some hundreds and thousands of years must have been, by the feeling we ourselves experience when expecting some important event. And yet, our Lord, in one moment's bliss among them, adequately made up for all that longing pain. In nothing is God greater than in His power to reward. Enter into the sentiments of some of those beautiful characters of the Old Law, and see what Limbo was like. These souls alone were allowed to be present at the moment of the Resurrection; they alone were the happy witnesses on this great occasion,

St. Matt. xxvii. 65, 66.

2. During the height of our Lady's affliction, when the billows of pain were raging above her head, and on all sides, the Holy Ghost was still brooding over her; feeling, as it were, the pulse of her anguish, and warding off each single suffering, which she would not have had strength to bear. So with us. No sorrow or trial comes without its grace, and, though we may perceive very little of its presence, still it *is* there.

We can trust God implicitly that something will come to assuage the pain, if we only go on leaning on Him.

St. Matt. xxviii. 1—4.

3. Then came the Resurrection, and of all mysteries this requires the most unselfishness to understand. It is a mystery full of joy; but those who want to profit by it must forget "self." In general, self is only "in the way" during meditation.

We have sorrowed, not for ourselves, but for our Lord; now we must also rejoice in our Lord's joys and glory, and the comfort and unspeakable happiness of our Blessed Lady.

CONSIDERATION.

The Sacred Heart.

This devotion is not properly understood; though it is so popular, many of the books written about it only serve to puzzle people; and the more I inquire into the matter, the less I find it understood. Yet

the simplest may comprehend and practise it; it does not require subtle brains, but a loving heart.

The history is simply this. In the first years of the Church, when faith and love were warm in the hearts of Christians, they came into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament with the utmost reverence and devotion, because they knew that He was present there, as really as when He had been bodily in their midst; they could talk to Him, and listen to Him as truly as then. But as years rolled on, and as faith and love grew colder in their hearts, and as heresies did their dreadful work, not only in the hearts of apostates, but even of those within the Church, then, by degrees, men grew so careless and indifferent, that at last the Council of Florence had to order that all should receive our Lord at least once a year. What a humiliating fact!

Long years passed thus, till, at last, one day, as a simple nun was praying in the choir, compassionating our Lord on the ingratitude He met with everywhere, He opened the tabernacle door and spoke to her: "I loved, and I am not loved; I am only outraged and grieved in return for My love; and what grieves Me most is, that those whom I have lavished most of My graces upon, make Me so little return."

That is the whole history of the devotion.

Our Lord found a simple soul;—one heart, at least, on earth that beat in unison with His own; and to her He spoke.

For the first few years this devotion met with bitter persecution and contempt; then it was treated with complete indifference; whilst now it is a most

popular devotion. It is simply a devotion to a Heart that loves and is not loved; that is lavishing favours on His loved ones; and is, in return, treated with coldness, ingratitude, and outrage; so the two special objects of the devotion are love and reparation. And, now, how to do this? It is easy enough. Do what your own heart dictates; do what you think would please His Heart; avoid what would pain It—the dictates of a loving heart are sure to be unerring in this respect to the Prisoner of Love in the tabernacle. We know that He is there, whole and entire; that His Heart is there, loving, praying, suffering; that every drop of His Precious Blood, every fibre of His Sacred Heart are there. Oh! how He longs for sympathy! Let us try to be filled with this thought, so that it may become part of our very existence, and thus render our every thought, word, or deed a message of love and reparation to that loving, outraged Heart.

Let us try to think how He loves us; and let us remember that it is on those hearts on which He has lavished the greatest gifts and graces, that He inflicts the deepest wounds. It may be only a simple aspiration of love we can offer, a simple thought of Him in His loving abjection, a little flower laid at His feet; but whatever it be, it will speak to Him in language He understands, and which He will not forget.

Let us try to make others realize this love, and remember the great secret of influence over souls is, first to make them know and feel that Jesus loves them, before we try to make them love Him; and, in

our work, when we have to deal with souls who have very little intellect and often a great deal of heart, this is the only means of doing real good.

Let us, then, when we come before Him, bring a lively faith in His presence, and in His loving, suffering Heart.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Holy Women and St. Magdalen.

St. Mark xvi. 1, 2.

1. How many lessons do these words convey to us!

Magdalen loved much, because much was forgiven her. She *knew* what sin was, and was ashamed. We think we have not sinned as much as another; we realize sin less, so less is forgiven, and we love less. Then, we see Salome, once so imperfect, asking for first places for her sons; now the Passion has changed her; she is so good. Cannot we also change and grow better? See how united these holy women were in their purpose! There was no strife amongst them; they showed respect to elders, and believed they were better than themselves. They show respect to the law; they wait till the Sabbath is over; they are eager, but not impetuous in rendering service; there is no breaking of rule.

St. Mark xvi. 3, 4.

2. They were tranquil till they neared the sepulchre, and then they began to fear. "*Who shall*

roll us back the stone?" As soon as we allow vain, silly fears to overcome us we are undone. Don't mind difficulties; *go on* should be our motto. Help will come, if we only advance, for those who are loving God. Let us strive for the things that bring peace (*Imit.* 3—23). All our difficulties can be overcome if we will but bridle our imagination. They all loved our Lord, and were so busy about Him, and had no thought of self. They had prepared the spices. Do we take the trouble to prepare our meditation, to seek out what would help to make us better? Do we make meditation one of the centres of our lives, taking an interest in it and working by every means in our power to ensure its success?

St. John xx. 11—15.

3. What has a soul, who is seeking only God's will and God's interests, to be afraid of? Humiliation is nothing to her; she goes quietly on her way, fearless and free. Are we like St. Magdalen, only happy in our Lord's company? A soul engrossed with personal love of our Lord will pass through life unhurt by those very shoals on which others make shipwreck. True love will enable us to pass through many cares and trials, even when worn out with fatigue; until at last we find Jesus, and say to Him, "*Master!*"

LAST MEDITATION.

Our Lord and St. Peter.

St. Luke xxiv. 34.

1. The circumstances of this vision are not mentioned in the Holy Gospels; it is only said that "*The Lord is indeed risen, and hath appeared to Simon,*" as if the Apostles doubted the other apparitions, but believed this one, as Simon was their head. And now let us try to picture this Saint on that bright Easter Day (it may have been on Calvary or in the Garden of Olives), making his meditation. How much has happened since we last saw him with our dear Lord kneeling at his feet! He has fallen most deeply and most publicly; all Jerusalem had known that he was the foremost of his Lord's followers, and yet publicly he had thrice denied Him with oaths and protestations, and this before the others, and in the presence of his Divine Master, who, turning, looked on him! What mute language in that glance! what tender reproach! St. Peter understood it, and in one instant his heart was changed. He never after forgot his grievous sin; and tradition tells us that the tears fell constantly from his eyes and wore furrows in his cheeks.

2. Familiarity with the story takes away from us somewhat of its heinousness; but let us imagine what would be the feelings of a priest who, on the day of his ordination, had denied his Lord, or a Pope guilty of a public apostasy! And now St. Peter was fully humbled. That singularly vain and

self-reliant character had been brought low; *now* there was no more impetuous boasting, no more self-confidence. All was changed; it needed this great, this bitter fall to crush that nature, to make it recognize its own nothingness, and that dreadful sin had done its work! Now he was prepared to receive God's choicest graces and greatest gifts; the highest honours were to be conferred on him; the most unheard-of dignities bestowed on him; he was to be Prince of the Princes of the House of God, and all this made no change in him; there was no room now for self-complacency and vanity. He was enveloped in his self-abjection and humiliation, and recognized all as God's gratuitous gift. And let us look at this penitent Apostle as he kneels there thinking over all this, acknowledging his sin; but full of confidence based upon his intimate knowledge of our Lord's great love. Our dear Lord appears to him as he is kneeling there. He looks upon Peter; there are no words spoken; their eyes meet, and at once there is mutual understanding. A full and generous pardon St. Peter knows he has received, and he is reinstated in his former favour; no reproach, no taunting allusions to his deep fall; but from his deep shame and sorrow springs his great confidence, which is not mistaken.

3. Our Lord, all radiant in His risen beauty, each wound shining with star-like beauty. Let us congratulate Him on His happiness and glory, and try to realize it, and to understand something of God's capacity for rewarding. Let us try to own the fact that, from the first moment our souls

existed in our bodies, *He* was looking forward to the time when He could reward us, could give us something in return for the little He hoped we would do for Him; and see how He has been rewarded: "What shall be done to that man whom the King delights to honour?" There is not a single humiliation, a single pain, a single lesson He gave, or step He took, or a single act performed, that will not meet its own special reward; and when we come to die and are admitted into Heaven, one of our greatest surprises will be the immensity and variety of the rewards prepared for us. Now, St. Peter sees His transcendent beauty, and he knows his Lord can suffer no more. Those Feet shall be no more weary, that Body that suffered so much shall enjoy perfect repose and bliss, those Eyes that were struck and blindfolded shall be for ever surrounded by all that can delight, those Ears that heard the awful cries, "Crucify Him!" shall be for ever regaled with the song the virgins sing. We, too, are to share in His bliss, in proportion as we have shared His Cross.

Third Retreat.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

God has created me.

1. God has created me, and created me for Himself.

We should penetrate ourselves with the conviction of the closeness of the tie, of the relationship, that creation implies between God and us, and make it practical in our lives. No saintly mother, whose love no bad conduct can interfere with, ever loved her child as God loves each one of us; God's interest in us is incessant, is in every step of our lives, is never wearied. From eternity He has designed each soul with its own dispositions, qualities, repugnances, and temptations, and the body with all its peculiarities in which each soul has to dwell. Thus, He knows thoroughly our weakness and miseries, and has boundless pity and compassion for us.

It is a miserable delusion ever to think we have *tired God out.* No two souls or bodies are alike; God has framed each with boundless care and thought to draw special glory from them. If we spent weeks,

or years, over a splendid piece of embroidery, should we wantonly leave it all night on a garden bench to spoil? or in a fit of impatience (though we had spent large sums of money on it), throw it into the fire? No; God will never abandon us, or tire of us; His interests are our interests, and our interests are His. It all comes from the great truth of God being our Creator, which has so filled the saints with confidence in Him. It is impossible that joy can be shut out from any life where there is the conviction of the alliance that exists between God and the creature He has made.

2. St. Thais made that one prayer: "Thou who madest me, have mercy on me." Many *balance* their service of God; but, in reality, the advantage is all on our side, for God's interests are ours; when we injure His interests, we injure our own. Many secret blessings to our souls are hidden under the trials of life. God's interests being mine, He will of *His own sake* provide me with every grace and help necessary for me. Once we understand this truth, we shall realize that every fault is an unmitigated folly, as well as an offence against God. I injure myself in proportion as I turn away from God, my only good.

3. God created us to praise, reverence, and serve Him.

David's dying prayer was one of praise.[1] How much more reason have *we* to praise God, who has chosen us for the immense blessing of religious life! What a privilege to be the brides of Christ! to dwell

[1] 3 Kings i. 47, 48.

in the same house with Him! to be clothed in His Mother's robe! to bear His own name! David is our example. The greatness of his sins did not prevent his praising God. His wealth, and his being surrounded with worldly enjoyment, did not make him forgetful of praise. God has chosen us, set us apart, that we may praise Him, both in our own name and in the name of those who neglect to do so.

Indulging in sadness is such ingratitude. It is a dishonour to God, as though His service was wearisome; it is an injury to ourselves. Sadness is the effect of *deceit; truth* must bring joy; if we are sad, we are indulging some false idea of *God* or ourselves. Our sins should not prevent the spirit of praise; acknowledge and sincerely repent of them; then more praise than ever, for we know God has forgiven us, we believe His word. If we praise God, we shall reverence Him, and give Him an acceptable service.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Life of Faith.

St. Luke xix. 41, 42.

1. Look at our Lord weeping over Jerusalem, because she did not know the time of her visitation.

Does not our Lord weep over each soul which uses creatures for other ends than those for which He gives them? God is behind the creature, if only we would let faith point Him out. This living by faith makes all the difference in our lives. It is not when great trials come that we fail most. On these

occasions the principles of faith, resignation, and confidence, deeply imbibed in our hearts, spring up and recognize God as the author; we adore His Divine ways. But such trials happen rarely, and we may easily find ourselves at the close of life with our hands empty, if we let all little opportunities pass by, and only trust for a harvest to the big ones. It is in these little things that our want of generosity comes out. If we could but use the daily annoyances, tiresome misunderstandings, unforeseen accidents of frequent occurrence, as God would have us use them, how richly laden we should enter Heaven at last! There would be no more policy, self-seeking, jealousy. With *our last end clear before us*, how tenaciously should we cling to that which would help us! with what loathing we should turn away from all that would impede our course! Those things which waste our life we should drop and despise. What should be respected, would be respected. What should be obeyed, would be obeyed. What should be esteemed, would be esteemed. What should be ignored, would be ignored. What should be contemned, would be contemned.

2. Use the thing God puts in your way at the moment, then consider it as done with for ever, though its consequences are everlasting. Some things come direct from God, sealed with the broad seal of His Divine Majesty—like sickness, for instance. If we ever dare rebel against these, no wonder we turn with indignation when the message comes through a secondary channel. But, whatever it may be, kindness or unkindness, pleasure or pain, praise or

criticism, nothing ever reached us which has not first received its seal and sanction in the Heart of Jesus!

3. St. Teresa's favourite saying was, "What do creatures matter to me? I shall be *alone* when I meet my Lord; I must think creatures were created for me, and not I for them." We ought to be indifferent to creatures after the grand act of our profession and renunciation of the world, and the things of the world; in which we chose that which would lead us to God, and rejected what would be an obstacle, and at a great sacrifice, which cost us much. What a reflection for us, that years after this heroic act, we allow ourselves to be led away by trifles, to prefer such miserable nothings to God's will!

It has been well said, that the acts of renouncing the world to enter Religion, and of dying for God in Religion, are the only two things that could make the angels envy us.

CONSIDERATION.

Our Vocation.

Look abroad upon the world, to see what it is like and how few therein are in the right way, in order to ascertain more thoroughly what the grace of our vocation is. Recognize its obligations; those things which were of counsel are now become of strictest precept. "*Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?*" said St. Peter to Ananias. Let his most terrible warning help us in this point. Do we correspond to these obligations? Wherein are we wanting?

Our vocation is something peculiarly our own,

whose fruits we shall enjoy, and for which each one of us must answer for ourselves; and stand or fall by ourselves. It is most intimately concerned with our salvation; and experience has taught us how low the fall from it can be. Our vocation is precious in the sight of God Himself. Even the world esteems it in a certain sense. How precious it is to those who have best experienced its value, the best and holiest on earth. Take those you know, or esteem the most, and infallibly you will find abundant marks of the tender affection which they bear towards it.

Let us look at the temptations against our vocation that the devil makes use of. He tries to make us believe, either that it was not necessarily a permanent one, or that it was undertaken in error. How, then, could God call us to that in which He did not intend we should find our salvation? How clearly this temptation bears the mark of the evil spirit, being caused, as it always is, either by the cravings of the flesh, restless ambition of some worldly distinction, or the devil's own promptings of anger and impatience of correction.

In our Retreat, let us endeavour to *renew our will.* We must be *business-like.* Let us imitate business men, not in their motives, but in their habits; the *one thing* must occupy us. The spirituality that St. Ignatius teaches is essentially business. Let us have no vain fears, or vague scruples. Fear of the past should lead to a good confession—fear of the future, to solid resolutions. See how you stand and return thanks to God for the inestimable blessing of your vocation.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Self-Immolation.

1. Creatures mean everything we use, or which affect us. God is the master of everything which lies outside our free-will. Even so little a thing as the passing thought of another concerning us, is dependent on Him. Every kindness is His gift, as also every unkindness—sealed with His sanction. Kindness is sent to encourage us, to give us means of mortification, which we practise by not attaching ourselves to the creature. Unkindness comes from God. He says, "That is good for My child." We must pass over the agent, and thank the Giver. No one is responsible to another for his actions; we have no right to blame any one.

The wise never grumble at the postman who brings an unpleasant letter. All creatures are God's postmen, they only deliver what He sends. Every creature comes to me through God's providence, sent to help me the sooner to obtain possession of Him. A sharp word which gave me pain, was sent to help me to correct a fault, or acquire merit, and was a kind act on God's part, for God's providence in this life is always kind. Our duty lies in a prompt acceptance of everything that happens, and an act of faith in God's will and God's providence. Noble independence is the lesson to be learnt, as creatures of themselves can do nothing: why fret, or fear, about what is going to happen to us through their means? It is all in the hands of God we may be in peace.

2. Many of the works of Religious are lowly and humble, and therefore solid; and they attract little attention from the world. They therefore offer little food for vanity, and we think ourselves secure in plunging heart and soul into the business of the day. But this is not corresponding to the designs of God. What He willed when He called each one, was the cultivation of the interior spirit. His wish was, immolate thyself to Me. The devil dissuades us from it, saying, immolation is not our line; but it is our line, the line of each Religious, if we would co-operate fully with the designs of God.

Try to get from the brain to the heart, that a Religious should be "as a stranger, and as one on a journey," happy in meeting with kind friends, but never attaching herself to any creature; knowing she is but "on a journey," she should be living for the future. Why wish to change house, or companion, or employment? It is not change that will make us happy. Nothing will do that but putting the heart right and straight with God. We can always be happy, if we lift our hearts above the waves of this world, and see the sunshine and shore of the one towards which we are hastening. If we look on creatures as minor angels, charged with a grace and a merit, any event will remind us of God's loving thought of us. Each bearer will tell us that we owe thanks to God for its message; and that we shall one day have to answer for the grace of its coming, and the use made of it.

3. Inordinateness in the use of creatures means, not making a right use of them. St. John Berchman's

rule was, to use eyes, ears, and tongue, only when charity, obedience, or necessity required him to do so. Those do not make a right use of remedies to preserve health, who go on without them to avoid the humiliation of asking. Our health is the property of the community, we must act accordingly.

Again, some persons always expect Superiors to find out their ailments for themselves. It is our place to tell, not theirs to find out.

Again, some take *too* great care of health. It would be a sad thing to see Religious in sickness throw off the yoke of obedience, and give up practising the virtue of indifference.

We should pray to be delivered from the danger of having whims and fancies in sickness.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Sin.

1. A striking fact with regard to the fallen Angels is that they had no demon to tempt them. It brings out in awful colours the power of abuse which is in free-will. Theology has long speculated on the motive of that sin; but never has it found even a plausible explanation of the fall of beings so full of light, untempted. Their punishment makes the flesh of the thoughtful man creep. All our natural sympathies are with those who are cruelly punished; and, if man could have traced the least trace of passion on God's part, his nature would have

revolted. But it is the awful calm, the perversity of their fall into an eternal hell, that freezes us: the wrath of the Lamb.

2. The devil seduces Eve, but not Adam; Adam's fall is our lesson; a man of his calibre abandons God and salvation at a woman's persuasion. Let us consider his softness; his sympathy led to his ruin.

3. The single sin; adapt this thought to your own circumstances. *For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me. To Thee only have I sinned, and done evil before Thee.*

Make an urgent colloquy with the crucifix in your hand. Reflect how many, many times you have been forgiven, only to outrage that mercy with more presumption. Beg that the fruit of this meditation may be a true and abiding shame.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our own Sins.

1. Raise your eyes to the Blessed Sacrament, in whose presence you pray, and elicit a lively act of faith. Begin in the spirit of St. Ignatius' triple colloquy in the meditation on sin, to know its grievousness and horror, and to see how much this is wanting to you; and that you may be filled with a deep detestation and dread of the spirit of the world. Reflect on your true relation to Almighty God, that you came from Him, are going to Him, should tend at every moment towards Him. How utter is your dependence on Him.

See, now, as far as you can, whether your feelings, with regard to Him, have suffered any diminution, if the liveliness of your horror of sin has been dulled. Run in detail through your conduct in your duties to your neighbours, superiors, equals, inferiors, or dependants, and, lastly, yourselves. Think of their multitude, and that they were against Him who hath loved us even unto death. Let us think, also, of the graces we have wasted.

2. Consider the words of St. Ignatius: "Oh, if every one would suffer the grace of God to do what it would with him!" How great these graces are, how precious! The least of them have cost the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ! How numerous they are! attending me at every moment, rising, or going to rest, at meals, recreation, everywhere! I walk through graces as a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through flowers! I, leaving them behind me, weeping at my inadvertence! Let me consider my graces. In particular, my vocation, constant instruction, correction, good examples, so many spiritual duties. See how each has been used, how abused; see whether the good example we have received may not have been only not followed but even contemned, the work of the Holy Ghost frustrated and scorned.

As in St. Ignatius' colloquy on sin, imagine you see your Saviour nailed to the Cross. He not only is the most prompt argument of the infinite evil of sin, but when He has, in that spectacle, shown us what we have rejected in His love, and the graces He has bought for us, He still gives us hope of

recovery. In this colloquy we may say that St. Ignatius has kept the good wine until now. Let us rejoice in Christ Jesus and His infinite patience and love for us.

CONSIDERATION.

On Venial Sin.

Man knows not whether he be worthy of love or hatred. I cannot tell whether, at my death, I shall go to Heaven or to Hell.

Let us think of the consequences of failure; that the first time we meet Jesus, whom we love, whom we so much desire to serve, who is our all, that when, at last, we see that Face we have so often thought upon and desired to see, it should be only to hear from Him those heart-breaking words: "Go, go, ye cursed!" and, then, for ever lost! lost for so little! For so little! At that hour, how small, indeed, will seem those things for which we began to leave the safe path! Even now we cannot hide from ourselves their insignificance; those who personally renounce them are no less happy than we. What shall we think then?

How easy the means of security! Let us have a great horror of the beginnings, and we shall not have to deplore results. We shall find it is a little thing, an easy thing which God wants of us during this Retreat. Let us not deny it to Him. According to St. Ignatius, let us beg our Lord to demand of us that which we are most unwilling to give.

He that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little.

We may best judge of the extent of the evil of venial sin, if, after having, as far as we can, measured the infinite distance between ourselves and Almighty God, we call to mind what the resentment is which we feel when insulted, though it be by an equal. If an inferior insults one above him he is punished, whether he be a servant, or a soldier, or a son. If a king is insulted, it is termed treason, and punished with death. When we have thus estimated a venial sin, let us reflect upon the number of them which will be found against us at the Day of Judgment. Finally, let us reflect that this dire confusion is not the whole, or the greatest part of the evil they produce. Their worst punishment is what they actually now produce in our souls,—the indifference, the hardness of heart, the darkness of mind when prayer is forgotten, its sweets unknown, its strength unfelt, and the miserable, desolate soul is drawn by the devil to seek for comfort in the commission of sin. Let us end this consideration by making acts of faith, hope, and love.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Death, Judgment, Hell.

1. To confirm in us the impression of horror of sin and compunction for our past tepidity, we take as our composition of place, ourselves, or another, at the point of death. Let us consider what death is, what its effects are in regard to us—to our body which it will reduce to ashes, to our soul which it will instantaneously submit to the judgment of infinite

justice—to those objects to which we have any attachment which has led us in any way or degree to offend our Creator, and of which it will certainly strip us naked. Let us face the thought: death will come; many Religious even procrastinate; we think, when I have more time, when the distractions of teaching and superintending are over, when I can be more to myself, I will begin to live the spiritual life indeed. Which of us can promise himself any such season of quiet? who can count upon another year of life, nay, another day?

Am I ready now? What shall I wish to do if I were this very hour called upon to give my account for eternity? St. Aloysius said, if he were to be told that he should die at the end of recreation, he would still go to recreation. Are we able to say the same? Are all our duties performed equally to the satisfaction of our own conscience? If we should have to change them in order to prepare for death, certainly the necessity is not less now—let us be practical.

2. At our Judgment we shall not be asked what sins we have committed, but whether we have done the known will of God. In how many ways is God's will made known to us, and without any doubt? A criminal in the dock listens to the examination of his case going on, he knows justice has to be done, there is no appeal now. Our time will then be past: why not do now, what we shall one day wish to have done, when it will be too late?

3. In thinking of Hell, let us ponder on St. Ignatius' beautiful prayer, that if love should

fail, the fear of Hell might help him not to offend God. Let the imagination work, and picture to ourselves the sight of the lost ones in Hell; now we see what a help the imagination is; when under a master, and kept in order, we may use it for all the senses, and with profit. God's interest and ours can never be separated.

Hell is a place where those go who think they can do without God, a place that God has abandoned. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall *see God;*" the lost souls are without light, they do not see God now; but they have seen Him, and know to the full what they have for ever lost. What are our faults and sins committed in full light and knowledge of what God is? Let us make our colloquy at the foot of the Crucifix.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Kingdom of Christ.

1. What is this Kingdom of Christ? We are not to treat our Lord as did the innkeeper at Bethlehem, who would have received either Jesus Christ, if He could have paid him, or Herod, just as willingly. He is to be all in all to us. His interests are to be the ruling principle of our lives; His approbation is all the pay. This Kingdom of Christ means victory. We have been studying how to hate, fly from, and resist sin. Now we come to our true life, to put on Him who says, "*Have confidence; I have overcome*

the world." It is not enough to resist; we must advance a step; our work is now to cast down. How great was the condescension of our Lord in His Incarnation! It was the mysterious expression of God's desire to respond to the yearning of man's heart—a yearning that even the Pagans felt—to have God close to them.

2. If we aim rightly, we shall be gradually forming ourselves into Religious, of whom people will say that they remind them of Jesus Christ. This should be the fruit of repeated Retreats. When David besought Urias to go down to his house, the soldier answered by a protest, that he would never take thought of his own ease or pleasure, while his general and the ark of God were encamped upon the unsheltered plain. This devotedness had never assuredly been provoked by the motives which offer themselves to us; and yet, in us where is it? Shall Religious, then, seek themselves, and spend their energies upon some base, selfish end, when the souls their Lord died for cry to them for help?

3. Let us say, then, as St. Ignatius invites us to do in the colloquy, that we do desire to enlist ourselves among those who shall be distinguished in the battle; and offer our Lord our choicest, most darling, and most cherished passion. Let us repeat the offer again and again, *wishing* to mean it utterly. And so great is the simplicity of God—He would not, indeed, be God if He were not infinitely simple—that He will take our word which we pledge to Him—half meaning it, then half wishing to mean it, and hoping to mean it.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Incarnation.

St. Luke i. 26—38.

1. Think of the joy of the great Archangel when he was called to the foot of God's throne to receive the message he was to bear from Heaven to earth. Yet, it was not his redemption but ours—to save poor, mean creatures so far below him. Do I feel joy in the good of others, even of the meanest? How all the angels honour him as he passes through them on his way, and there is joy in Heaven! If it were not for selfishness, there would be more joy, even on earth. My heart must be either faithful to Jesus Christ, or a slave to self. To know and love Jesus Christ is eternal life.

2. Look at our Lady; admire her brave wish to please God alone. See how reverently the Angel enters to his Queen. Hear the sweet words, *Ave Maria!* the first time they are uttered on earth. What a treasure was given to us, even in those words! Are they a treasure to you? Think how our Lady was *chosen out of thousands* to be the means of God's mercy to the world! Oh, that I might be her image!

3. When our Blessed Lady yielded her consent, a wondrous work of hers was done at that moment —the happiest moment the world shall ever know. Then Jesus Christ was given to us; and how, also, with Him hath He not given us all things? Then our God became in very truth our Brother; then

Mary our Mother; then were the tears wiped away from our eyes, and our reproach was taken away; and the Heaven of Heavens was opened to us, and He—who should show us the way, and feed us on our dreary road, and lift and cleanse us when we fall, and be not only our Saviour but our Friend, our Lover and our all—He at last was by our side! At the first beat of His Sacred Heart, all the world was changed, for the sun was risen after the long night; and the morning was come at last, which should know night no more. Do I realize what Jesus Christ is to me? how He is, indeed, all my happiness? Shall I not, then, exult in the day on which He is given to me? Shall I not seek to make Him the centre of my life here, on whose Bosom I shall rest for ever?

CONSIDERATION.

Three Classes of Religious.

St. Ignatius wishes us to consider the three classes, to keep us from delusion, that we may really ascertain and recognize the state in which we are, lest general professions should usurp the place which real, solid purposes should occupy.

1. Then, let us consider these Religious, and first the tepid one—the one who regards rules as things to be observed as far as the Superior's eye renders necessary, who is bent on having ease and comfort, as far as possible. These look with impatience and disgust on the restraints which surround them, and gall them like fetters. Their hearts are full of bitterness, for they have no one

source of happiness—the present is a burden, the future not to be thought about. Such we may imagine Luther to have been before he threw off the mask. The expression of a Religious in this state is recorded: that the very sound of the rustling leaves made him start in agony, lest the judgment of God should have come.

2. Now, the second—the imperfect Religious, who make a reservation in their holocaust. They observe their rules except where the cherished passion intervenes,—be it sloth, frivolity, inclination for this or that small indulgence which they prohibit. How much imperfection is in all their motives! how far are they from enjoying the plenitude of peace, the hundred-fold! If any one should come to us and say, "I have had the grace to learn that, in twelve months, I shall be called to my last account. What would you advise me to do?"—if you knew him to be living in the state we have described, would you not feel bound to say, that it would be rash indeed to continue in it, that God might not be satisfied, that temptation might overcome him, that the way from such a state to a far, far worse one, was steep and rapid, that where venial sin is not held in horror, mortal sin may soon find room? And should we be less kind, less wise for ourselves than for another? shall this argument, which we should so certainly find at hand for him, be lost to us?

3. Let us see the perfect Religious who refuse nothing to God; who place, in simplicity, the rule-book before them, and say, "This book, as it is interpreted by Superiors, is the voice of God to our

ears." They suffer, as those who are generous to God always suffer; but the best consolation is, that each twenty-four hours is so much suffering passed for ever, the price of the eternal never-ending joy which has been gained in Heaven. And then their peace, the unknown heaven of the faithful servant, is in their own hearts the inexpressible joy of the conscience. And they know that their Angel Guardians look approvingly on them, and the saints regard them with delight; and Mary, their Mother, loves them; and above all, there is God—God is pleased! Who would not suffer for this?

The Will of God is your Sanctification.

We are created for perfection; it is the Will of God that our lives be spent in the pursuit of virtue, for this we have received every favour which God has given us. He sent His Son. He forgave us the sins we committed, for nothing else but this, that we might begin anew and attain, as far as possible, perfection.

We are called to it. "*Walk before Me, and be perfect,*" was addressed not to one who had adopted the counsels, but to Abraham of old. How much more to us to whom that singular vocation has been vouchsafed, to abandon all things for God—most especially, it is the one end of Religious—to no profit shall we gain the salvation and perfection of our neighbours unless we are ourselves keenly desirous of our own.

All that Christ did—all the torments He suffered, were to procure this. Shall we disappoint Him?

Some find satisfaction in the mysteries of His Divine Infancy, His Hidden Life, others in the sorrows of His Sacred Passion; but, whatever it be in the life of our Lord that we look upon, it had no other end than our perfection. Ingratitude is a failing that those who have no religion are shocked at. Yet what ingratitude can equal ours, if we leave our Divine Lord to hang upon the Cross, to die in agony and desolation, while we, without a thought, reject and abandon what it cost Him all this to purchase for us?

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Holy House at Nazareth.

St. Luke ii. 51, 52.

1. Kneel on the doorstep, and most likely you will be invited to enter. But, before you go in, explain the cause of your visit; say that your life is so like their life, that you want to see the manner in which they spend their days, so that you may imitate them. You will not have got thus far without a thrill of gratitude, that God has called you to that life which most resembles the one spent by His Son on earth. Remember how often I have told you, that if anything will make us miserable on our death-beds, it will be our want of gratitude. We have taken His countless gifts and benefits as a matter of course; and we have let vain solicitudes, and foolish fears, choke up the gush of gratitude which ought to have burst forth every moment from our hearts' depths.

2. Contemplate the hidden life, think of the perfection of perfection, that no one knew it was perfection. *Is not this the Son of the carpenter?* people said afterwards when they heard of His miracles. *Is not His mother called Mary?* This is very high and very beautiful perfection, too high and too beautiful for many of you to understand. Perhaps, when you are old, you may come to like the hidden life, which is the crown of perfection. Love to be unknown and unnoticed, says the *Imitation*, and the same golden text tells us: "Observe the good common way of those with whom thou livest."

3. What a cure for vainglory, that arch-enemy of God—simple, common life, and nothing more! When you find self in every action of the day, showing itself by the thought: What will they think? what will they say? did they see what I did? it is humiliating, but it must be borne. There is no use in getting angry with self. Despise yourself, be on your guard; and, if you get some raps, thank God for them, and ask the help of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to love and imitate, in however small a degree, the hidden life.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

1. The meditation of the two standards is proposed to us that we may discover the illusions of the devil, and his ways of compassing our ruin; and, on the other hand, the manner in which our Lord would

have us fight in His cause. Represent to yourself the devil seated on a high throne, in the dark barren plain of Babylon, encompassed by fire, and he a king marshalling his subjects, innumerable troops of devils. This is not the real picture of the devil; his true image is that of a blighted thing, filled with sadness, melancholy, despair, gnashing his teeth, and clenching his hands with rage. He, more than any one else, knows that his end is lost; he holds in his grasp for ever the thing that caused him to lose God. *Melancholy* is the best portrait we can draw of him. But he is a cruel, a remorseless enemy to us; and well he chooses those among his hosts who can best succeed in trapping the souls of nuns. Any little fish would do to tempt people in the world; but he minds whom he sends to a convent.

2. His orders are to make people think they require numerous things, dispensations and exceptions. When once Religious yield to this temptation, relaxation is not far off.

Content yourself with common life, and never omit its practice, unless compelled by necessity. Those who grumble in the hearing of others are Satan's right-hand ministers.

Perhaps, sitting between two Religious now, listening to my words, is a fiend, who has already ruined half a score. Well may we fear; he is old, experienced, well up in every kind of human weakness, and only waiting an opportunity to destroy us. And, for those who pass judgment on everything that comes within reach of their five senses, giving their opinion asked and unasked, what safety can there be?

The devil is too clever for any of us; our only chance of escape is, by constantly submitting our judgments, and entirely following the guidance of Superiors. Then we are safe: he cannot hurt us, he is powerless. Another great snare of the devil is to make us attach ourselves to comforts, and to wish for consideration. If we let ourselves be entangled by any of these things, we are fighting with him at a disadvantage. He will get the better of us in a very short time, unless we keep our hearts in a state of perfect detachment.

3. Then look at our Lord sitting in lowliness, and gently calling His followers around Him. For our Lord's Face was beautiful in its calm, sweet dignity, attracting all hearts to Himself, unless like the wretched Pharisees, they resisted its power. His very glance infused a love of holy purity in all who gazed upon Him. Look at His manner, the expression of His eye, the sound of His voice. How do we resemble Him, when engaged in our duties? Let us range ourselves again, and more truly than ever, beneath the standard of our King, who has overcome the world, the devil, and the flesh.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our Lord and His Apostles.

St. Matt. xiv. 13—34.

1. The account of this miracle, as given in the Gospel, is a perfect picture of community life. Candour and simplicity in the Apostles' relations with our Lord; firmness, gentleness, and sympathy

on His side. His life with us Religious in the Tabernacle is exactly the same as His life with His Apostles. A study of any amongst the Apostles of our Lord will well repay us; for, had they not been called like us, was not their mission like ours, to teach our Lord's doctrine, to seek and to save that which was lost? They seemed also to have a share in a certain spirit that some religious souls have a great affection for—a kind of distrust and want of confidence in our Lord. One might imagine they had in their possession some private catechism telling them not to trust one inch to God: to be sure every minute detail is confessed, to mention exactly every circumstance, everything they said, or thought, or did yesterday, or are likely to think, or say, or do to-morrow, to be perfectly certain everything is told, nothing left to His mercy, to imagine Him always on the watch, waiting at every corner to upbraid them. The Apostles at that time were only men, weak and timid. St. Peter, we may suppose, had been watching our Lord, and criticizes His conduct, inclined to draw his own conclusions; yet there was no real distrust, but the beginning of that wonderful personal love of his Divine Master that carried him bravely through so many trials, hardships, persecutions, and such bitter falls. Then there is dear St. Andrew, with that genuine deep devotion to his Divine Master, who said, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" That Saint, whose deep and fervent love made him exclaim when he saw the gibbet on which he was to die, "Oh, Blessed Cross, take me to my Master!" Amongst the disciples was the guileless

Nathaniel; there was no scheming in him, no trying to outwit others. He was a man of simple, honest heart. How unlike were the Apostles then, to that which they became after the Resurrection, when they were brimful of courage; now they are cowardly and weak, yet one day their voices are to resound all over the world, their lives and deaths are to be its wonder and its glory. We may learn from them to desire, to be greedy of *great* graces. "Open wide thy mouth, and I will fill it." Be avaricious of the greatest, the most precious, the most abundant graces.

2. We ought, all our lives, to have a child-like spirit with our Superiors. We should be ready to work when we are told, just when we expect recreation. Our Lord had provided a recreation-day. His Father's Will changed it into one of fatigue. After feeding the multitude our Lord *obliged* His Apostles to get into the boat and row to Bethsaida, without giving them any reasons. The Apostles obeyed the command promptly, although it was an unpleasant order.

After spending the whole day in labour, our Lord went up on the mountain to pray. We are never to neglect our spiritual duties on account of our work; we are never serving God by doing so under any pretext.

When they were in the boat the Apostles began to complain—they had had no rest, no dinner, hard work—it was as if our Lord had forgotten them. We feel this sometimes with Superiors; before judging them, let us put ourselves in their place.

Every time we say a thing is hard, we accuse God of injustice; because all creatures, all events, are *God's* Will if there is no *self*-will in them. When a trial comes, then is the time to say: "This comes from God, God is omnipotent, and He loves me."

Later on the Apostles were afraid on seeing, as they thought, an apparition; they were *frightened* when they saw our Lord walking on the water, because they had been discontented. Our Lord only said, "*It is I, be not afraid.*" Then St. Peter, so full of love, presumption, rashness, and vanity, asks that he may go to Him upon the waters; and our Lord, so gentle with Him, tells him to "*Come*," and then St. Peter sinks. Vanity and self-complacence lead to a fall. Every evil happens to us because we doubt. "*Oh! thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*" There would never have been any Religious in Hell if they had not doubted our Lord's love for them.

St. Luke viii. 23—25.

3. When there is a storm in our hearts, how often we neglect to have recourse to our Lord in the Tabernacle! There is no cry that comes from any human heart that does not go straight to our Lord's human Heart, and find a sympathy there; and it is *always heard*. Our cry is sure to wake Him, if He is sleeping, in our hearts. The Apostles, perhaps, shook our Lord, saying, "Lord, Lord, we are going to sink." Every cry, every word of ours is treasured in the Sacred Heart. Our Lord said, "Why are you troubled?" We get troubled about our sins, and

think our Lord has not forgiven us; yet, if we commit faults every five minutes, and as often are sorry and try again, our Lord forgives us each time; and, if we go on like this to the end of our lives, our Lord will always forgive us, and, when we come to die, receive us into His loving arms. To commit the same fault almost directly again is no proof of want of contrition, and no reason to doubt our Lord's love for us. We honour Him by trusting Him like this. All He wants is that we should be sorry, and try again, and never doubt His love; this is what pains Him—to doubt His love, and that we are forgiven.

CONSIDERATION.

On the Religious State.

The chief beauty of life lies in presenting to God the most perfect sacrifice in our power. We must go back to the beginning. Why were we put here? God created us for His own ends, and we have no *choice* but to serve Him; we are under a necessity, for we must do it here or hereafter—there is no alternative, as if some men might choose to serve God and others not. Not to serve God would be sin, and sin is madness. But we are free to choose religious life, and give a sacrifice to God. Then, see how perfect is the sacrifice of the vow of obedience; we are no longer our own, we have placed our all in His Hands, by our Superiors. Hereby we make the *best bargain*. We see men every day making sales of their lives, and disposing

of their place and manner of existence, for worldly motives. Soldiers and others deliberately devote health, and give up residence in Europe, even life itself. Mercantile men cheerfully go off to the antipodes for a master who *cannot* remunerate them. We make a better bargain. Religious life enables us to fulfil the obligations of our Baptism. How few, how few, ever remember that they have vowed renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh! Yet, by these vows we shall be judged! The *sentimental renunciation* of the world, to what does it amount? We know how really difficult it is, and that the best means to render it easy are poverty, chastity, and obedience, heartily embraced. It is to God we make the sacrifice—the Creator—all-powerful to reward or to punish. It is reciprocal, this alone is enough. Religious life is full of blessings.

These blessings are gratuitous, and not merited by us; most of us, perhaps, will have no difficulty in recognizing the long resistance to grace on our part. When we think on what there is in the history of our past life which could have deserved such a favour, we cannot but be humbled. He leaves one apparently all fitted, all desirous, all deserving; and takes you, who, perhaps, are neither. The grace of vocation is *providential;* much may seem to have been the effect of chance, by faith we know that nothing is really so. One is educated here or there; another meets with such or such a person; reverses or illness arrive,—these are the means the providence of God has made use of to

secure His ends. The providential dispositions of God will be one of the eternal sources of contemplation and gratitude with the Blessed in Heaven.

Religious life is *rich* in its effects; the grace of vocation is called *one;* but it contains many, indeed it surrounds us with every incentive to do good, shuts out every temptation that is not in our own hearts; it bestows on us the constant presence of Jesus Christ, and turns the whole effort of our lives to attain that which all acknowledge to be the *one* thing necessary, yet which so few make any attempt to secure. Poor children of the world! they arrive at the portal of death, as naked as the poorest Religious, and how fruitless do their labours seem! In to-morrow's consideration we will continue this important subject.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Blessed Sacrament.

St. Luke xxii. 14—38.

1. Behold our Lord giving to His Apostles the Bread of Life. St. Ignatius teaches us to ask the double grace—grace for the understanding and grace for the will, to know how great a means of perfection you are here possessed of, and to use it well.

Recall what the Blessed Sacrament really is, remembering the expression of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, that one Communion is enough to make a saint. It is, indeed, a thing which appears inconsistent with what we know by faith, when we see

so many Communions and so little sanctity. Now carry the same reflection home. Physician, cure thyself!

2. There must be no misunderstanding between us and our Lord, no clouds of doubt or mistrust hanging over us. "This is the Body which is *delivered* for you." Yes, truly delivered for you. *We* have His Passion and His sufferings; they are ours. And, if a soul finds that our Lord is asking her to do something which at the time she has not the courage to embrace, let her not give up in discouragement, thinking herself a good-for-nothing creature, but let her adopt the following plan. By the side of the shame of her cowardice, she can offer up the merits of our Lord's Passion, saying to God, "I feel I cannot *now* give what Thou art asking of me; but with Thy grace I hope the day will come when I shall be more generous." Such a soul is, at least, *straightforward* with our Lord. "Do this in memory of Me." Look at our dear Lord's Passion coming out. His longing to be remembered. Think of Him often. He told St. Gertrude, that never did a sinner give a passing thought to His Passion, but it drew down upon him the eyes of His mercy.

3. "I will sing to My beloved a canticle. My beloved had a vineyard on a hill, in a fruitful place, and he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine-press therein, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes; and it brought forth wild grapes. (Is. v. 1—4.)

"Answer Me, what have I left undone for My

beloved, that I have wild grapes only from her garden?"

Jesus Christ thus reproaches us; but it is a reproach of love. He reminds us of what He has done for our souls. The high hill is the Church, and Religion is the garden of His choice. Rules and regulations fence it round, not alone keeping out harm, but, by their practice, bringing in good. The stones He has pulled out, that is, He has removed the stumbling-blocks, which intercept so widely the path of those who are trying to lead good lives in the world. The tower signifies the "vows," so great in their efficacy that Holy Scripture says, "The obedient man shall speak victory." The wine-press is indeed ours; not earthly wine, but the very Blood of Jesus Christ, shed once on the Cross, and daily offered on our altars, to atone for sin, to nourish, cleanse, and sanctify our souls. Wild grapes, indeed, has our Lord had from us, in return for His love and care; nevertheless, lift up your hearts in gladness, for the Blood of our Lord has washed your souls—all is forgiven! Rejoice with exceeding joy to receive Him in Holy Communion. He exults when we rely on the riches of His Heart to make up for our deficiencies, to cover our sins. We cannot trust Him too entirely. And, when you have Him all to yourself, in that moment of intense union, then, once more sink in your own nothingness, tell Him you know it is because you are so poor, so little, so mean, so undeserving, that it redounds to His glory that He treats you with such condescension and familiarity, that, whatever the past has been, the future shall be

entirely dedicated to His service, and that you will begin from now the life of submission and love which you hope to continue in a blessed eternity.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Agony of our Lord.

St. Matt. xxvi. 36—46.

1. Sadness creeps over the Face of our Lord in His walk to Gethsemane after the Supper; and this unusual sight causes gathering fears to awaken in the hearts of the Apostles. He then enters the Garden with St. Peter, St. James, and St. John. He wants comfort from His friends. He has a real human Heart, and their sleepy want of sympathy is an acute pain to Him. It is just because no one can sympathize like Himself that He feels it so much when we forget Him, and turn to creatures for sympathy. Then our Lord allowed sadness, and fear, and weariness to creep over Him; He *allowed* it, just as He allows each one of our pains to touch us.

2. A mountain of our sins pressed on our Lord as He knelt on that dreadful night; but while sins of seculars pressed on the outside, those of Religious pierced within His Heart. The Agony is described in few words: "He began to *fear*, to be *weary*, to be *sad*." Many saints have *feared* before the time of trial, but when the moment came they were brave. Let us but do our imperfect best, God will have mercy on us, and give us grace in the time of temptation.

Weariness is one of our greatest temptations. We know our own littleness, falls, and discouragements, and we wish to throw all up by saying, "What is the use of my labour?" Then the thought of our Lord's weariness comes to sustain us in our work. Sadness and sorrow of Jesus Christ! Oh! that is our comfort! How many souls *wish* for sorrow, and feel that theirs is so inadequate! But, covered with our veil of shame, we can take our Lord's sorrow in our hands, and thus ask for pardon.

3. During this painful Agony, our Lord made to His Father the one great act of contrition, by which all *our* acts of contrition become efficacious. If we are scrupulous and doubt after having made our act of contrition, we are insulting God, we are robbing Him of His glory, and we are placing perfection almost beyond our reach. With a bright and happy smile, we should rise from our knees after each such act; for its power of obtaining pardon lies not in us, but in its being joined to our Lord's contrition on that night of His Agony in Gethsemane.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Passion of our Lord.

St. John xviii.

1. We left our Lord on His knees in the Garden. Soon the soldiers come, and from the mob we must learn a lesson. How different was the pain each one of the crowd was inflicting on Him! Surely the blows and the bonds were the least part of His

sufferings. Consider Judas, who could not make up his mind that our Lord would forgive him, and, in consequence, hanged himself; his *despair* of pardon was the worst of that night's injuries. For the manner of their sin, though not in degree, Religious resemble the unhappy apostate, when they sulk over their faults, and harass their minds by continual fears about their past sins. Our Lord is now taken before Annas. This unhappy old man lets passion blind him. He certainly had been among the number of those who had tempted our Lord concerning the woman taken in adultery. He had, therefore, along with the rest, received the humiliation of having his sins written out before him; but humiliation had only made him harder and more envious than before. That is the way. We are wasting the gifts of God, if we will not take humiliation.

2. Humiliation is what our Lord valued most of all God's creatures. No humiliation, properly accepted, ever goes without its fruit. It may be useless, but that comes from the want of faith, and of proper dispositions of the recipient, not from the humiliation itself. All, high and low, must have some taste of it; for our Lord is bent on doing His own work, and He pours it from His own chalice into every soul. But, though the mind is clouded when they come, and while we are smarting under the lash, we are blinded, as if with physical pain; still, if we will but bear them and endure, light will gradually unfold itself to our eyes, and we shall see how good they are. For the seed to bear fruit, it

must die in the ground. For our souls to bear fruit, they must be humbled. No matter how humiliations come, still good will come of them. Not at the moment, for it is the way of the world to think much of those who are made much of, and to despise those that are despised; but in the end all will be right.

3. What passer-by in the streets of Jerusalem, a quarter of an hour after our Lord's seizure, on hearing the talk of the crowd, would have supposed that His Name was to be the most honoured upon earth? And yet our Lord's manner of confirming His doctrine was, to let Himself be dragged about in presence of the very men whose teacher He had been. The blow He received in the house of Annas may well put us to shame; we, who can bear nothing, not even a word, without answering back. How do we feel about this insult offered to Him? The unworthy jests of which our Lord was the victim, and the other indignities heaped on Him, none but the angels will ever know until the Judgment Day. What impression do these make upon our souls? what fruit will the memory of them bear?

CONSIDERATION.

The dangers from which religious life preserves us.

It keeps us from the corruption and follies of the world; all of us are old enough to know how bad the world is—how general is the contamination: there is either idleness, and the train of evils and sins it entails on the one side, or avarice on the other.

Folly is held legitimate even by the best. It preserves us also from the burden of self-government; a wise axiom is, "Destroy self-will and you destroy Hell." As long as young people, even in the world, are surrounded by those whom relationship binds them to respect, they seldom throw off all restraint, and this check is seen to full advantage in Religion. Religious life delivers us also from the dangers of our own inconstancy.

What are the advantages secured by religious life?

The hundred-fold in this life. Our poverty secures to us everything we need, and keeps us from evil; we have all we want, and so have all Religious. God never abandons those who have thus placed themselves in His hands. Yet we can never grow attached to these things, and God alone knows how great an advantage this is; for He alone can read our hearts, while we know that over-attachment can be a cause of reprobation. It secures for us a glorious eternity; it is to say little for Religious, that they live on from week to week, and from year to year, without a mortal sin—shame, indeed, were it not so; and yet, this is salvation!

What are the obligations of religious life?

The adoption of that spirit and principle which Jesus Christ taught, which we learn in the Second Week of the Exercises; and this leads quickly to that personal love that we must feel for the God-Man, which is so especial a mark of our vocation. Creation's blessing comes through redemption; and

it is in the putting on by *love* of the affections, principles, sympathies of Jesus, that the work of a Religious lies; here is the secret of separation from the world and attachment to our vocation.

THIRD MEDITATION.

He has risen.

St. Luke xxiv. 54.

1. The three crosses are still erect, but their burdens are gone. Thus will it be with us—every pain will have an end. St. Augustine says, "Wish, and you are justified." Apply these words to the eternal lot of the two thieves.

St. Peter approaches. Behold his tears, his sorrow, his shame. As his former passion of self-reliance, of presumption, was fearful; therefore tremendous had been his fall. Nothing short of this could have taught him self-distrust: Our Lord bore in sorrow and pain the twenty years of St. Teresa's infidelity, that she might achieve humility. Cannot we, like them, make our falls stepping-stones to virtue?

2. *The Lord has risen and has appeared to Peter.* Our Lord would not return to Heaven as long as He had a sorrowing heart to ease. No reproach on the one side, no doubt on the other. Peter could look into our Lord's Eyes. "Why?" Because he had the spirit of shame. St. Peter afterwards earned for himself the praise of "most faithful;" with shame came constancy. Ask him for his prayers.

Contemplate our Lord's glory, rejoice with Him, so unselfish, rejoice in His joy; think also of the joy

of His Mother, and rejoice with her. She has suffered so bitterly for our sakes; how glad we should be it is over; and soon with us our sorrows will be over, and our joy will be full and eternal.

3. What was our Lord's occupation during those forty days after His Resurrection? He spent the time in consoling all His friends, letting them know He had forgotten their cowardice. Did He, then, reproach no one? Yes; to *one* He gave a severe reproof; but it was because he doubted. Let us trust God. Distrust is the one thing He hates; He can turn every other fault to His glory and our sanctification; but not this one: it defies Him; let us have done with it now and for ever.

LAST MEDITATION.

On the Love of God.

1. What a beautiful idea that is of Father Faber's, that, after God has made each of us, He keeps His arms round about us! Who has given us the gifts we possess? First, creation, redemption; then the many particular gifts each one has received; and, above all, He desires to give me Himself. What ought to be my return? with what fervour ought each of us to make our offering! Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all that I have and possess! Do I keep in mind that God is in all His gifts? He is around me; in Him we live, and move, and have our being; therefore, how hard I should strive to keep myself in His presence, to realize it!

2. In all things that He has given me, in all the circumstances of my life, God is working for my good. "*The very hairs of your head are all numbered!*" What return shall I give to Him? It can be but little; but, at least, I will *work* and *fag* for Him. Take, O Lord, and receive, all that I have or possess!

3. The gift of vocation—what shall we say of that? Some enter religious life in innocence, in which it pleased our good God to preserve them. If this had not been His pure gift, they might have fallen lower than others. Then, there are those who have had to pass through the bitter knowledge of their own sins. But in each case those precious graces, known only to themselves, should be dwelt upon as the surest way of increasing and deepening their gratitude. Then, dwell on the thought that we are able to *return* our Lord's life of labour, by our life of toil and self-sacrifice. Religious cannot give money, nor lands; but they can give flesh and blood. Well may we appreciate our vocation! Is there anything greater than this wearing out one's life for Him? Yes; one thing more: to go on, until in each creature we see the perfections of God. His wisdom in one—His purity in another; and so on, till, at length, each creature becomes in our eyes a ray from God, lifting up our minds and hearts to that blessed time when we shall see Him in the fulness of His beauty.

Fourth Retreat.

NOTE.

The following Retreat is from notes of one given by Father Dignam to the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, and the parts marked by a ✠ from notes written by himself. A small portion was printed in 1880 for a very limited circulation, and has long since been out of print.

ON THE EVE OF THE RETREAT.

Let us think how thoughts in Heaven are occupied with us just now; and placing ourselves at our Lord's Feet, let us see our Mother close by Him and all His saints; and let us see how each one is interested with us, just as much as if no other nuns existed in the world. Let us see our dear Lord's Hands, full of graces for each one of us; and how anxious our Mother is that we should profit by them; and, in the sight of so many, and especially our own dear Mother; let us not be afraid to pray for light, and courage, and strength to act up to the light we receive. We all know that light means sacrifice; yes, it means the sacrifice of *self*, and the more light we get, the more of self we must sacrifice; and this

is why so many, when they reach a certain stage in the spiritual life, stop there; they are afraid of the light, and so they turn on one side and don't like to see it. Oh! let us not be such cowards! let us remember in our solitude with God not to be afraid of His asking something we don't like to give! St. Ignatius says, "Enter into solitude with a large and generous heart;" we have made many Retreats before, and have made them reverently and well; and, as the reverence and attention with which Retreats have been made is a remarkable feature in the Institute, let us now be at least as faithful as we were when we first began to make our Retreats. Fidelity to the Additions is the guarantee of a good Retreat; if we are faithful to them, then indeed God will have His own way with us.

Insomuch as you are happy in the possession of God, insomuch God is happy in the possession of you; and this He longs for and yearns after, both now and hereafter.

We are going to spend eight days alone with God, excluding every created thing. Well, this is enough to make us ask the question, "Then, who is it that I am going to be alone with?" It is necessary to learn something about God, even if we were only going to spend eight days in His Divine embrace; but we are going to spend more than that, for we are to spend the whole of eternity in His fond embrace; let us see, then, what are our relationships with our God. We will go back to the beginning, and from all eternity let each one see God occupied with the thought of her; and as in His Divine mind, past,

present, and future are all the same, so He saw each one whom He would create, as you were when in His own Divine mind and heart, and as you are now, and as you will be with Him through all the ages of eternity. In the very beginning, that is, from all eternity, God made up His mind that He would create a certain person; and with a soul and body, passion, weaknesses, dispositions, and affections, which would give Him glory; and to that person He would give the special love of His Heart, the special place in His affections, the special place in His mind, and she would be the only one who could ever get that special love from Him; and she is the only one who can ever give Him the special and peculiar glory which He is anxiously expecting from that soul;—and that person is myself, really and truly, and no other; for God has created me for Himself in time and eternity, and no one will ever get my place in His Heart; and no matter how ungrateful, unfaithful, perverse, and bad I may become, still, so long as I have life in me, God is anxiously trying to touch my heart, and draw me back to His love.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

God my Creator.

1. God is my Creator; I am on my journey; I have but a few short hours to prepare for my eternal home. Am I prepared to enjoy that place our Lord has waiting for me? He is waiting for me in

Heaven; imagine the soul alone to meet our Lord, to see His smile, or His frown, as He turns away from her for evermore! If I have thousands of earthly friends, what matter will they be to me, for I must meet our Lord alone? God loves me as if I were the only one soul in the world. God my Creator is waiting for me. I am on my journey, and must pay the cost—the cost of the happiness that awaits me there. I have my own soul to lose, or to gain. God is my Creator. How can I pray rightly, if I do not think to whom I am going to speak? If we have the love of prayer in our souls, we shall have consolation, even in desolation. We can serve God with glad hearts, if we only consider how He loves us, and use in the right way what He has given us. He is ever thinking of us, and His Blessed Mother has been leading us by the hand.

2. God formed me with the greatest care. I am His creature. He thought of me, and the particular glory I should give Him. He knew how He would prove me, the means He would give to enable me to show Him my love, and give Him the preference. He would give to me those qualities, weaknesses, crosses, trials, and pleasures, those defects, and those virtues, all of which are necessary for my sanctification and His glory. In creating me, God had some particular design regarding me, some particular service He wanted from me. What a condescension on God's part to ask my service or to accept it, and to think that He must beg it from me. What pride on my part, mass of corruption that I am, ever to refuse it! He created my soul to be

united to Him for all eternity, and I have my own free-will to serve Him or not.

3. God has created us to praise, revere, and serve Him, and it should be a joyful service; therefore, unless I have a cheerful heart, and love to do His will in the person of my Superiors, who hold His place, it will not be a cheerful service. The spirit of joy and gratitude is the spirit of praise. The spirit of joy adds fresh beauty to our actions. To praise God perfectly, we must always praise in our hearts our Sisters. We were created to show Him reverence. I must, then, revere all His gifts, even the least; how much more, then, my Superiors and Sisters, whom He has so richly gifted! Why should I not trust in my Creator? This name should at once arouse my confidence.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Eternal Salvation.

1. The one thing necessary is to praise, revere, and serve God. Diligently must we labour to do this. What, therefore, is the diligence we should use? Consider what labour our Lord went through to ensure my salvation; all He did and suffered was for my own individual salvation, as if there were no other to be saved. What, then, should be my diligence? Take example from our Lord, from the Apostles and Martyrs, who laboured without intermission. We should labour, not only with diligence, but with perseverance, and in fear and trembling; but this does not mean that we are to put on a

long face and to be always trembling lest we have committed a mortal sin. There are two kinds of fear: one servile, the fear of a slave; the other, the fear of a child; the first contracts the heart, the other dilates and expands it; but we should fear lest we should displease our Father. During the past year let me see if I have been remiss and negligent in labouring to please my Father. Have I gone about it like a slave, or a child? Have I given way to any despondency or dejection? Beg that, for the time to come, you may labour with great perseverence, fear, and trembling for this one thing. Beg that you may see the importance of saving your soul, and may labour to attain salvation. You were not made to gain honour and esteem, or to prolong life, or to gain riches; all these are transitory. You are made for God alone; nothing else will make you happy and satisfy your heart. One thing alone can fill your heart—that for which you were made—eternal salvation. Let us make a resolution, then, to gain this spirit, with the view of its being our business and duty towards our Father, who has been pleased to attach the reward of eternal salvation to this.

2. God is above all things our own individual God. To save our souls is our ultimate end; to praise, reverence, and serve God is our proximate end. Eternal salvation is the brightest picture that any one can conceive; to be seated at a banquet where God Himself will minister to us; to be plunged into an ocean of bliss and happiness that shall never change—and never end; to draw close

to God, so close that we can rest on His Breast; to look right through Jesus Christ, and be able to understand how God could so put Himself into nothing as He does in the Tabernacle. Eternal salvation is to have my poor heart set at rest at last; to have my soul let loose and flying off to God; to have my soul hot with love of God, drawn to Him with an irresistible love; and this happiness is to go on as long as God is God! Billows after billows come rolling onwards, over and over, and they would wash us away if God did not support us and hold us up. How contemptible is the happiness of earth! All God wants is that you should not tear yourself away from His embrace, and He will carry you by force to Heaven. Oh, pray for faith to realize the reality of all these things; and then, whatever temptations may come, we pass over them; they are as nought to a soul that has a strong hope of salvation!

3. Pray to know your dignity as having God for your Father, Jesus Christ your Brother, and the Holy Ghost your guide. In *one* sense, God has loved us more than His Son; for He sacrificed His Son for us, not us for His Son. The soul in the state of grace is without spot, the most beautiful thing in creation which God loves to look upon. He is hurt and pained, but not angry, when we offend Him. God cannot be vexed. You cannot ruffle the gentleness of God. The characteristic of a Christian is filial fear. We know we are children of God, not slaves; we are out of gear if we do not realize our position as children of God the Father,

sisters of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost. The life of the Holy Ghost is mixed up with our life. So each one can say, I am the daughter, sister, and dwelling-place of God, and I will pant for home. The *beginning* of wisdom is fear. When once we get close to God, away with fear. Perfect love casteth out fear.

✠ CONSIDERATION.

The Object of our Retreat.

The main end of our Retreat must be to restore us to the state in which we were at the close of the last one; to renew the first fervour of our service to God; to counteract those worldly influences which, even in our little world, are ever crowding out the freshness of our perception of the great principles which maintain us in our state of life. Nothing can do this better than the Spiritual Exercises.

"*Deal favourably, O Lord, in Thy good-will with Sion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up!*" We come into Retreat to repair the ravages which a year has made in our souls—a year of crosses, labours, trials; and our Lord is offering graces, not only to the whole Institute, but to each individual soul. Our Lady is looking on, waiting to pass those graces on to each soul. Let every one listen to what our Lord will say to *her*.

The work of a Retreat should be to repair the past, prepare for the future, and use the present generously. "What, then, are we going to do in this Retreat?" We are to gain light and under-

standing for the holy state to which God has called us. As plants require water frequently to help them to grow, so do our souls need food to help them on in God's service.

What gratitude should we feel to our dear Lord for letting us meet together and dwell under the same roof with Him!

It is not easy to resolve upon a life which is a daily cross. But the cross has long been associated with motives which are potent to impel us to embrace it? What was the primary end for which we entered Religion? We came to save our souls; but we shall not be saving them, but, rather, placing them in peril if we do not work out the plan we have adopted. Let us be confident. If the past year has sad and bitter memories, let us be certain that never shall we present a more pleasing sight to the Eyes and Heart of our Divine Master, than we are now about to do in our Retreat. Our confessions, our sorrow, our generosity will repair the pain we have given Him. And the pardon and the grace for a true persevering reform will not be refused us. Let us think how He loves us, and let us long to enjoy that unmixed happiness which a fervent life alone permits us to taste. We must consider also that good example is expected from Religious, and much scandal is given if they fail in the universal edification they are supposed to afford. If we do not respect ourselves, if we do not recognize what we are, and what we are rightly supposed to be, shall we not find our work for souls deprived of its fruits, and bringing forth only corruption? A holy

writer says that Religious who pass long years in Religion, and yet remain imperfect, are prodigies, considering all the means of grace they have had at their disposal, and all the favours that have been even forced upon them. Our Lord said to St. Catherine of Siena, "Religion is as the ark: outside it, all is destruction; but in the ark only those can remain who strive to serve God perfectly."

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Use of Creatures.

1. Our Lord has bestowed so many graces on me. Was it that I should waste them? *No;* but that I should use them in the right way, in the way He wills. Neither sadness, darkness, nor sorrow can drive Jesus from my heart, if it be not by my own will.

How sad it would be, after leaving the world, and all that was dear to us for God's sake, to be attached to anything but Him! We were made for eternity, our souls are too large to be filled with aught but God. We will give up all attachments for our Lord's sake.

2. We are to use creatures as far as they help us towards God, and no more. Just as a carpenter uses his tools, taking the one most useful to him; so with us as far as creatures draw us towards God we are to use them, and put away whatever turns us from God, as the carpenter puts away the hammer when he wants a chisel.

3. Why did God place me in this world, and surround me with creatures? He has placed me in

this world for a time, to earn the throne He destines for me; and every other creature was made by Him, as a help to me in attaining my last end. God wants me to gain that end; He is ever watching to see if I use creatures in the right way, especially as regards the *trials* He sends. He is behind them, watching to see if we take them from *Him;* and they must be for our good, though we cannot see it. If creatures are a means of bringing us to our last end, when rightly used, they are also greatly to be feared as having a dreadful power of drawing us away from God, by causing us to love them for their own sake, or for the pleasure we find in them. Detachment brings peace to the heart. To attach ourselves to creatures, is to embrace decay. How absolutely nothing creatures are, unless rightly used!

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Use of Creatures (continued).

1. The "use of creatures" means all the circumstances in which we are placed—doubts, fears, temptations, consolations, and desolations. This and that person, this or that event. Why do things happen? Not by chance; all are arranged by God to forward our salvation. We should use creatures often by trampling on them, just as we tread the steps of a ladder to gain a summit; but, instead of this, we often cling to creatures and things of earth. We cannot attain our throne of glory, if we do not trample on creatures. They are made for you, and

you are made for your elder Brother Christ Jesus, and He is made for God. Creatures are to be used in one of these ways: either by contemplation, use, or rejection of them, in so far as they help me to serve God or not; if they do not, I must reject them.

2. Creatures help us when, by our contemplation of them, they raise our souls to God; or they support the body by their nourishment. There is no littleness with God, no hair-splitting with the saints. *They* were like Jesus Christ, they had large hearts. Nourishment is to give strength and health for the prosecution of our end. The safe principle about creatures is to take what helps us to our end, considering what is needed to enable us to praise, revere, and serve God. If I go by what I like, or dislike, I make myself a god, and put God out of His place. From the vault of heaven down to earth there is one big book, and on every page is written, "God is love." As regards the senses of my body, the faculties of my mind, my love for my relations and all other beings—desolation and consolations, prayer, good example, every circumstance in which we are placed,—we are to have the same object in view, and to make use of them for our end.

3. And what is the reward? Eternal salvation, and that means we shall be in the embrace of God, in closest union with God. Eternal salvation means to sit close by our Father's throne with our shining crowns on our heads, and His eternal robes wrapped around us, and to be steeped in happiness, as long as *God is God*. If we could only look into Heaven,

and see what is to be our reward, we should not care for anything here. We shall be happy in proportion as we keep our end in view, even here; and, in the next world, happy with our God, nestling close to Him!

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Holy Indifference.

1. We are to labour to become indifferent. To what particular things does this indifference extend? To health, riches, honour, a long life. By riches, I mean the comforts that riches bring: fire or no fire; easy-chairs or hard benches. Intellectual riches, desolation, apparent want of faith, loathing our spiritual duties.

2. What are the motives to urge us to indifference? It is the only true happiness, in order to secure the right use of creatures; it is reasonable. Why should we try to become indifferent? Because every Christian should be so. You are not practising indifference to honour or dishonour, unless you will forego everything that you may do your duty.

3. There are three obstacles to holy indifference: (1) Imagination; (2) Wrong judgments; (3) A depressed heart. Make a resolution to have done with the want of indifference. Look back on the past twelve months when you were unhappy; was it not from want of indifference? But it is indeed hard to attain indifference. What God requires of us is to aim at having it.

CONSIDERATION.

Love of our Rule.

On the love and affection with which we ought to regard our *Rule*, as the loving expression of God's will to me. On the cover I ought to see these words *written:* "If you love Me you will keep My *word*." Then, as a proof of faithful love, I will never depart from any portion of my Rule. I know it does not bind under sin, therefore I don't keep it from fear; but I do keep it as a proof of love. For some cause or other, this subject has not been taken sufficiently into consideration by all; but there is time enough now to remedy this, and I would place this subject before you early in the Retreat, and you can each examine yourselves as to how you stand. I am not now speaking so much of the Rules themselves; as the spirit in which we regard them. Remember the importance of this; for if you, who are the first members of the Institute, do not get a real and solid love for them, and reproduce them in your lives, you can never hand down the tradition to the next who are to follow. In the Society for the last three hundred years, every man of it looks on the Rule, and speaks of it, with a feeling of emotion in the soul. The very fact of the tears St. Ignatius shed, and the spirit in which he regarded them, as the expression of God's will for His children in all generations, is a reason in itself why they are so regarded; and any member of the Society who could look on them as light, or speak

of them lightly, would be looked upon with disdain. And if that is true for us, so it ought to be for you. Then, again, by the fidelity with which we keep our Rule, we give proof of our fidelity and love to our Lady, and show her our gratitude for having called us first to the Institute. Then a faithful love of Rule is a most positive mark of solid virtue; and it is not by any means the commonest ornament in communities, for see what a love of Rule implies. Great interior self-sacrifice, great detachment, and exceeding purity of heart. The very fact of its being a rare virtue proves it to be also a very choice virtue. I would have you enter cordially into the subject, and ask our Lord, during these days of solitude, to give you this grace, that the love of your Rule may be deeply impressed upon your hearts, and faithfully reproduced in your lives; and, when you come to die, it may happen, if you have an Infirmarian according to the spirit of the Institute, she may place in your dying fingers for your last consolation, your rule-book, rosary, and crucifix, and if you are not modelled in your life by your Rule at that hour you will say: "Yes, the beads and crucifix are dear to me; but what is that book behind?"

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Sin.

1. The Spirit of God is in peace; at the same time we must have a great horror of sin. Since the coming of our Lord, we have put aside the spirit of servitude and fear; but, instead of this, we must have

a great horror of sin, which may serve to withdraw us from occasions of sin. Beg earnestly from God the grace of an intense dread of sin, the grace of keeping far from every occasion which might lead into sin. Let us see how God visits sin, and the effects of it. Not one moment was given to Lucifer to make an act of contrition. Every single sin of thought makes you equal to a devil; yet, after all, you are the child of God and the sister of Jesus Christ. Let me try, the more I have offended my God, the more to love Him. The result of this meditation should be a sort of gushing out of love of God, and a desire to quit the body, to tell God that we love Him.

In every forgiven sin, we should see a new motive for love. We cannot now be guilty of a sin of pride in the sense in which Lucifer was; but there are various degrees and ramifications of pride. Suppose a beggar comes to the door and you are hard to him, you forget that you are yourselves the beggars of God.

2. Real pride is rare in the Catholic Church; nevertheless, there are sproutings of it even there. Try to be the image of your Brother, and as Jesus Christ was humble, to be so also. The lower you sink, so much the higher you will rise; because you become more like to Jesus Christ. Fly from the first great evil of *pride*. In the sin of Adam and Eve, God is, as it were, *compelled* again to strike a blow. How many times have I transgressed His laws! to what an amazing extent have I given way to self-indulgence! how great has been my perversity!

but greater still is the love of God. The first blight on God's creation is pride; the second, weakness of character. The idea of the daughter of God the Father, the sister of Jesus Christ, indulging her senses! I find myself confronted with my own dear God; I know His arms are around me and will not let me go; and the more He has spared me in the past, the more will I love Him now. Beg for the future to love in proportion to your want of love hitherto. What return shall I make to my God, for the deluge of love which He has poured on me? To love my God in proportion to His love for me, I will take up the chalice of salvation, and resolve to try to prove myself worthy of His love, and to live during the remainder of my life as a true child of so great and loving a Father.

3. Surely one result of this meditation will be to wish that I had never displeased God in the past, and to resolve for the future to avoid all that could displease Him. It is little enough to ask from a child, so petted and spoiled as you and me, to resolve with generosity and great confidence to prove ourselves worthy of this love. Pride must be conquered, and its offshoots, such as jealousy and envy of equals, rebellion against authority. Try to pull up the roots of pride by humiliation; that, by humiliation, being made like to Christ, you may rise up to Him.

In the second sin, caused by the weakness and sensuality of human nature, read your own history, when you were afraid of doing violence to yourself, to your likings and dislikings. Then, when you see

how God has in one instant punished a single sin, and know that, notwithstanding your many sins, all can be washed away in five minutes; that in reality you have, as it were, to get out of the way to escape salvation, what can you do but resolve to love for the future, according to the number of offences that God has forgiven you?

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Our own Sins.

1. The Angels were put on their trial, just as we are. In sinning, they *rejected* God, so do we when we sin. What a terrible thing it is to offend Him, who has loved me so dearly as to die for me! Was it my own goodness that brought me into Religion? No; it was because our Lord loved me—poor wretched sinner as I am; how patiently God bore with me! And, when I was a child,—how patiently He cared for and loved me! And when I had the use of reason and understanding, I offended Him; not only offended, but struck Him! Eve hid herself under the leaves of the trees for one act of disobedience. How often have I turned away from the voice of my Guardian Angel, and would not listen, and listened rather to the enemy of my soul!

2. Giddy persons cannot have shame, or real sorrow, because they do not think enough. True contrition is a pure gift of God, granted only to those who labour and pray to gain it. If we have never committed a mortal sin, we still have enough

of which to be ashamed. No matter how long a time we have spent in Religion, we must always fear, and let the prayer of a great Saint be always on our lips: "Lord, keep Thy arms around me this day or I shall betray Thee." We should never put aside the memory of our past sins. Though we hope God has forgiven them, nevertheless, it is certain that we have committed them, and we ought to recollect this when we come into His presence. We shall never know how great our sins are, until we are at the Feet of our Lord to hear our sentence. *What* is God whom we offend? Look at His awful sanctity and His exceeding mercy, His justice, which rules so admirably the whole creation! His goodness, which is constantly pouring out love, and benefits, and protection! And we compare ourselves with Him! And what are we in His sight? A loathsome foul ulcer, continually giving out from our own rotten minds the abominable odour of sin.

3. We need abiding sorrow for sin. Our hearts must be full of sorrow for our sins, for the deep and cruel injuries we have inflicted on our Lord. Our sorrow should be continual. Every night, before we lay our heads upon the pillow, we should beg our Lord's forgiveness for our past sins. St. Peter sinned during one hour, but his repentance lasted all his life afterwards.

"True contrition is a pure gift of God, granted only to those who labour and pray to gain it." It is only the remembrance of sin deeply graven in the soul, that will give it courage to go on in religious life.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Death and Hell.

1. The end of life is drawing near. I am lying on a bed of sickness, and I know I cannot recover. What will then trouble me? Will it not be my abuse of grace? Shall I not then put before me my past life, and see how I have dealt with the graces God has given me? When I came to the use of reason, was it used to love God with, or to rebel against Him? How have I used *prayer*, that great means of grace! Alas! what negligence there has been! In every step of life, was there not sin chosen, rather than virtue acquired? Did I cause pain to good parents, whom God had given me? and did I set a bad example, and abuse God's grace, by teaching others more innocent than myself how to rebel against Him? And, since I entered Religion? Ah! the things that will trouble a dying Religious who has not been faithful, will be her infidelity to the Rule, her want of mortification, the disedification she has given to others. She will think of meditations spoilt, of the sacraments wasted, and of her many, many Communions. One Communion is enough to make a saint. Alas! how far is she from sanctity! And she will remember all her Retreats, all the exhortations, sermons, and instructions. Then her visits to the Blessed Sacrament. She will remember how little charity she has had for others, how she made them sacrifice their comforts to hers. What a multitude of abuses of grace has there been

in her life! Now it is her death-bed. The priest has come, the last sacraments have been given, the Sisters are weeping around; but not one of them can come with her before the Throne of God. Alone she must go to Judgment.

2. We know what will happen to the body after death; but the soul is going where she has never been before, to see things of which she has no idea, and to experience what she has never gone through. To have been praised and esteemed will bring no comfort at death; but to have suffered for our Lord will greatly comfort us. In Purgatory the soul will feel the loss of God's presence, and the sense of the glory she might have gained, and the pain she might have avoided.

3. We have often before considered the subject of Hell, and we should carefully use and entertain these reflections. But, let us not be unprepared for newer and yet greater lights, in which God may place this all-powerful thought before us, by which to urge us to a higher and more faithful correspondence with grace and an increase of holy fear. Let us consider the torment of the senses in this place of perpetual anguish; let us weigh this well; let us compare it with all we may do, or by any possibility can suffer in our service of God. Consider how the word eternity, which is ever before the eye of the reprobate, eats into his soul, and rouses him ever to new paroxysms of despair, only to sink again, and again, and again, under the bitter regret that this very word might have been his joy! But the fruit of this meditation must not be confined to an impression of

fear. None of us can look down upon that abyss of the miserable, without hearts filled with emotions of fervent gratitude and clinging love. Nor shall we find a more truly efficacious motive to make us cry out again, as sincerely and as fervently as ever we have done, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*"

CONSIDERATION.

On Tepidity.

Psalm cxv. 13.

What is the precise nature of tepidity? The habitual disposition of a soul that loves God more or less, but is not thorough. Thoroughness is to do every action with fervour and a pure intention; and the absence of this is a state of tepidity. The effect of tepidity is to make us see our good qualities, and not our bad ones. Consider the carelessness and unworthiness of this state, and how deprived of peace. The habitual state of a thorough person is brightness—a smiling face. And how am I to be thorough? Pray to see your faults and shortcomings. Have your heart in the right place, centred in Jesus Christ; and, if we can only do this, tepidity melts away. Then, try to get close to our Blessed Lord; and, in order to attain to this, be ready to make some sacrifice, and let there be no unwillingness to give up something for fear of what it may cost you. Every grace that has fallen on your head was a special grace, bought by the Life Blood of Jesus Christ. Of all the motives that could be suggested to move us to love God, take this—I have tried to

deserve the hatred of God, and He *will* love me. There is another life of the soul, the life of the love of God, and this is taken away by mortal sin. Let us only reflect on our past sins being motives to keep us from occasions of sinning again; and, in this way, meditations on sin will draw you closer to God, and your sins will melt away. Why should God hate the sinner? Because he does not hesitate to trample on the Blood of Christ, and to despise all the sacrifices God has made for our salvation; there is in this an insult offered to God by His own child. It is a mortal blow to the soul, and robs it of the grace of God, and, if once we are penetrated with this thought, there will be no danger of our committing mortal sin.

Let us truly sorrow over our abuses of grace. Conceive the *malice* of a single sin. How is it that the angels do not come against me, and cut me to pieces, and that men allow me to live amongst them, when I am but a dead dog, or a running ulcer? Let us strive for the spirit of self-abasement and sense of our own nothingness; in which we should see our miseries. It is good for us to see all this, that we may go in confidence to our good God. Then, how is it God bears with me? Because He wants me to love Him, to take up the chalice of salvation, *i.e.*, my rule of life and spiritual duties, and do it in the spirit of a penitent. It is only through God's mercy that we are not consumed; such a world of iniquity! It is because love drew a veil over the eyes of our good God, that He should not see our vileness. Let me come, then, to my good Lord, and own that I am only fit to be a *door-mat*, on which others may wipe

their feet. Let me be very sorry for the past, and resolve that, for the time to come, there shall be no more abuse of grace; and let me have a great horror of sin, and determine to lead a new life, and in good earnest take up the chalice of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Prodigal Child.

St. Luke xv. 11—32.

1. In what way does this parable apply to us? You may not, perhaps, have committed any grievous sin; or, if you have, it was long ago, and you are now really trying to serve God. But still, is there nothing even now that is keeping you away from God? Is there no prayer neglected, no vanity indulged in; or, perhaps, a love of gossip? If so, this parable holds good for the present with you, and our Father is pained for your souls. Why forfeit an eternal weight of glory for some little trifling gratification of the moment? Let us be thorough, and not pain our Father and blight our prospects for eternity. Do not be afraid to examine and see what is the little obstacle which keeps you back; it is a question of more or less joy in Heaven for you.

2. The parable tells us how the father's eye had been straining after his child, how he recognizes him under his rags, how he flies to meet him, and how the son's confession is lost in the father's embrace, and how he tells the servants to prepare the fatted calf, to find garments to clothe him, and put a ring on his finger. What has become of the

past? It is all forgotten, and our God stands forward, and tells us He is ready to receive every one of us in like manner; and He declares it shall be exactly in the same way as this child. It is not a fatted calf, but Jesus Christ Himself slain for you, and massacred for you. What must the angels in Heaven think, when they see you going to receive Holy Communion? You may be stained all over; but, if you will only come back to God now, *all* will be forgotten. The priest of God, by the words of absolution, washes your feet, and puts on you the clean garment, and comes down from the altar and places on your tongue the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

3. Oh! would to God that we knew Him! What a horror we should have of anything that would separate us from Him! What a yearning we should have to get near Him! If we only knew God, how we should rush to Him and nestle in His embrace, instead of having these wretched fears and cowardice, for we should understand His love. Pray, then, that you may understand the length, and breadth, and strength of the love of God for you.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Kingdom of Christ.

1. Sometimes we may think the road long and dreary; but our Lord says to us, "I have asked nothing of you that I have not done for you before." Our Lord invites us. He says, "Come, follow Me;"

and how often our self-love causes us to refuse His invitation, because it is a little hard and bitter; and yet, who can refuse when they reflect on what our Lord has done for us?

Our vocation calls us to poverty, obedience, and lowliness. How closely do we imitate our Lord's life? Obedience is the highest of the three vows, and the hardest, because it consumes our whole life. Our Lady was always bright, quick, cheerful, and gentle. How am I to imitate our Lady's brightness? By never being sad, even in desolation. Without the gift of humility, we can never become instruments in God's service. Humility gives two things: contempt of self and great confidence in God.

2. Do we ever go into our Lord's Presence, raise our eyes to Heaven, and say, "O my God, I love Thee!" when we have left a Sister outside, fretting on account of our want of charity? If so, our Lord certainly says, "You do *not* love Me." The spirit of your vocation is to do everything, great and small, seen or unseen, with the greatest possible perfection. Our Lady was the most perfect imitation of Jesus. The best means, then, to become like Him is to imitate her. Pray and strive to become more and more Mary-like. Remember she was ever bright, active, courteous, gentle.

3. Our Lord is the King of Peace. Whenever the soul is restless, this is the work of the enemy.

When our Lord called us to follow Him, He called us to intimate companionship with Himself, and took upon Him our formation. He can form

all characters for Himself. He had all kinds among His Apostles.

Our Lord sets His own life before us as an example, and says to us, as He did to St. Peter, if we follow Him we shall sit upon thrones, not because we have left all things, but because we have followed Him. Our Lord asks us to follow Him, but says He will be with us Himself to help us, and will be Himself our portion and our "*reward exceeding great.*" What more than *Him* can we desire, here or hereafter? He asks us to do nothing for Him which He has not first done for us. If we could do *at once* some great thing for our Lord, and then have all over, it might be easy enough; but we have to overcome ourselves slowly and painfully to the end of our lives; and this He teaches us to do by His long life of suffering, which followed the great humiliation of His Incarnation.

Some make resolutions at Retreats, and after they are over sit down and count the cost, and say they can't afford it. We ought not to promise if we do not mean it. It is time to be really in earnest in what we promise to God; we have been novices in spirituality long enough. How can we come to the altar and make a vow of obedience if we are unwilling to accept humiliations?

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Incarnation.

St. Luke i. 26, 27.

1. The more we separate ourselves from the world, the more we separate ourselves from misery

It is singular that every step in our mortal life is accompanied by tears. What is there, then, to stick to, and to cling to on this earth? Look at our dear, dear Lord. The things we cling to and love, and which are the obstacles to our salvation, are the very things to be despised. Jesus Christ, our elder Brother, lent Himself to the world, He was not of it. So we should lend ourselves only to this world. We should strip ourselves of any inordinate attachment to this world. You are the sisters of Jesus Christ; be not, then, bound to any earthly things. True greatness consists in littleness; if you wish to be great you must be little. God hath lifted up the littleness of His little handmaiden, our dear Lady. True greatness does not consist in what the world considers great; but, on the contrary, in that which it considers little. Look at our Lady. She seemed to be a most ordinary person; yet she was the greatest woman on earth. Ask yourselves, do I try to be unknown and little? Am I little in my own conceit? Our dear Mother was little in her own eyes. How good God is to give us all the opportunity of becoming great; *because* greatness consists in littleness, and I can become little, like my Mother, by corresponding with the graces God gives. When you get praise for anything, sink down as low as you can.

2. If an angel were sent to us, would he find us occupied about our Father's business? We ought to be at home with our God, to love solitude as far as it is possible in our state of life. *We* are troubled because we are not praised, and our Mother is troubled because she is praised!

Make a resolution to try and imitate our Lord, who asks you to come and join Him. You will have your cross, but it shall give you consolation. It is singular that, when we give ourselves thoroughly to God, crosses and afflictions come, indeed, but bring happiness with them, and we do not wish to lose them.

Always keep in mind that, by becoming little, we make ourselves truly great.

3. That wonderful *fiat* was spoken, that watch-word of all that has ever been done in this world, that token of perfect submission to the Divine Will. Then the God-Man was formed, and the Sacred Heart gave Its first palpitation, and the ineffable mystery of mysteries was accomplished. No words can picture it, no thought can realize it; we can only kneel in humble adoration, thanking God and asking Him to teach us its lesson. Then Jesus Christ was given to us, and with Him hath He not given us all things?

CONSIDERATION.

With our Blessed Lady.

We have already pondered upon our Lady, as the most perfect imitation of Jesus. She was ever bright, active, free in spirit, and gentle. We might say these words were embroidered on the corners of her handkerchief; they are her marks and characteristics. How am I to imitate our Lady's brightness? By never being sad. Sadness comes from the devil; his name is melancholy; our Lady was full of joy

and love. Look at her after the Incarnation; there was no thought of self, only of others; at once she thought of the necessities of her holy cousin Elizabeth. She was keen in observing the wants of others, and gave sympathy, even in trifling troubles, and was so gentle in all her gestures and ways. See our dear little Lord born into the world for you. It is the infinite sacrifice of infinite love. He has sacrificed Himself for you. And why, O my good God, why all this love for me? And a voice from the Tabernacle comes, "*With an everlasting love have I loved thee,*" and this love brings Him down on earth, and crushes Him into the appearance of a little bread. Oh, if we could only see how He has loved us, we should have but one ambition, to root out everything in us that hinders our loving Him! Another lesson from our Lord's Nativity, is a great contempt of the world. Do not let the devil or the world ever enchain our hearts to our comfort and convenience; try to cultivate a spirit of holy detachment, and use all things only for God's glory. Let us cling to our Lady's robe, and ask her to take our hand in hers and lead us to her Divine Son, and we shall be sure of a welcome.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Offerings of the Magi.

St. Matt. ii. 1, 2.

1. The gifts which the Magi brought to our Infant Lord have been often compared to the three vows of Religion; in fact, the whole history of the journey

of the Three Kings affords many a lesson for Religious. We cannot think too highly of our holy vocation: priceless are the treasures of grace with which God has enriched it, and it has an exalted place in the affection and estimation of God Himself. Let us see the Magi at Bethlehem, with their mystic offerings. They left the presence of the Divine Infant rich in graces of zeal and devotedness; they preached the faith of the Son of God as they returned to their country; and, at last, they were allowed to seal with their blood the doctrine they had learnt at the Crib.

2. In our vows we offer three gifts: the rich gold of poverty, the purifying myrrh of chastity, and the sweet-smelling holocaust of obedience, of which every act ascends gratefully to God, like the savour of incense. And He has enriched us, as He did the Magi, with graces; but, as usual, it is the creature who offers small, poor gifts; it is the Creator who repays with infinite riches, generosity, and bounty. By poverty, and the true spirit of poverty, if we acquire it, our whole interior life is changed, self is forgotten, all smaller and less worthy motives disappear, and, in whatever duties we are engaged, our lives are holy, fruitful, supernatural. The vow and virtue of chastity cannot be practised without mortification; hence it is compared to the bitterness of myrrh. *A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me.*

What are the means of preserving our hearts for our dear Lord and attaining perfect purity? The love of the Cross. Religious life was born and nourished at the Cross. Let us say with St. Paul,

God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. The vow of chastity separates us from the world, and the virtue leads us to love Him with all our hearts, soul, and strength.

3. Obedience—how do we practise and persevere to the end, in practising this beautiful but difficult virtue? Prayer, assiduous prayer, great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament are powerful means. An ancient Father said, "Every Religious ought to be able to say of the adorable Sacrament of the altar: '*my* Blessed Sacrament!'" Devotion to the Sacred Heart also is a great assistance when we contemplate all our Lord has done for us, the love of a Man who is God. We should cultivate, also, the love of religious life in itself, and of our own Institute in particular. Think of the sufferings that so many Religious have endured, and strive to emulate the love they proved so well. Think how, in other lands, Religious now are enduring great suffering from the hatred of the world—undisguised, pure hatred against Jesus Christ. How honoured, how privileged should we feel to be amongst this army! Oh, then, let us have courage to be most truly that which we vowed to our God to be!

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Flight into Egypt.

St. Matt. ii. 13—23.

1. Try to hide your good qualities. We sometimes think we should give edification to others by showing them; but we should try to practise virtue secretly, and, as far as we can, hide it, and *God* will make use of us to draw others to Him when He chooses. See the singular way in which God dealt with our Blessed Lord and His Mother, in putting them into difficulties and under trials. Let us ponder the mystery of God's dealing with His elect. Without suffering, we cannot be worth much; but be not afraid of crosses, for God will help you through them. Whenever you find yourself in difficulties, or are misrepresented, see the finger of God with a pencil drawing on you the outlines of His Love. It is stuff and nonsense to say sufferings are the badge of sin; if God is angry with you, probably you will know it by meeting with good fortune. Try for detachment, and do not be frightened at suffering, for with it will invariably come happiness and peace.

2. Look at the Holy Family; the most eloquent of them was silent, the most powerful was the weakest. St. Joseph, the least perfect, was put over the others. God often puts a Superior over those more perfect than he is. How did our Lady and St. Joseph spend the day with Jesus? Do not fear

God's providence; sometimes He will want you to go into Egypt. We ought not to want to be with congenial people, we should go with those of an opposite character to draw them to God. Let us trample on the shrinking from doing good to those we dislike. When our Lord went to Egypt, the idols fell down as He passed. Every time you go to Holy Communion, ask yourself, Have I got an idol which ought to fall down before Him? If we asked God to let this idol of fear of suffering fall down, we should soon conquer it. Always pray at Holy Communion to overcome your predominant passion or any weakness that disedifies others; let it be verified that the idols fall down before our Lord as He comes into the Egypt of your hearts.

3. Inconvenience, want, poverty, are badges of God's love; thank Him for making you like our Blessed Lord, and also when you are ignored by others. Are you attached to anything in this world? If so, treat it in such a way that you may use this world as if you used it not. If God let the sun always shine on you, He would not love you much. Oh, if you only knew how God watches over you, and the blessings that flow from holy confidence in Him! However clever may be the plans of men, God can upset them all. Only trust in God, and all your trials and difficulties will be sweet and easy. The Holy Family laboured hard in Egypt, so we should love hard work. Look at the obedience of Jesus, and imitate Him. The smaller you are, the greater you will really be. Try, then, to be little with the little Jesus.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Nazareth.

St. Luke ii. 51, 52.

1. Jesus Christ is now going through His Incarnation in His mystical life in the Blessed Sacrament. Very often one word from our dear Lord says a great deal, and even His silence speaks. See how much you differ from Him, and resolve to amend. Good communications mend bad manners; and by studying our Lord, and dwelling in His presence, we grow into His spirit. Persevere in a quiet, happy way, contemplating our Lord, and remember that five minutes of contemplation spent in aridity, are worth hours of consolation. From our Lord's life at Nazareth, let us learn the spirit of supererogation in devotion and generosity. Nothing can we see there of a niggardly giving to God just His due. Our dear little Lord had to be carried by our Lady; often in times of dryness carrying our Lord is a burden, for then He weighs heavily; never mind, you will find He will give you help and comfort, and afterwards He will carry you.

2. Let us try to have this spirit of supererogation, and be generous. Every step you take will bring you nearer to our dear Lord. True charity consists in forgetting self, to think of others. Your life must be a life of little sacrifices. Every thoughtfulness for others is a thoughtlessness of self. Ask yourself, have I Jesus with me when I walk? See our Lord

and our Lady on their way up to the Temple. They were not obliged to go. In everything, we ought to be eager to practise supererogation and charity. Do I show the same calm and quiet recollection in the church as Jesus and Mary showed in the Temple? Correct every kind of want of reverence in holy places. Do not speak of priests, or discuss their conduct. Do not give hasty reprimands. Curb your tongue. See Mary forgetting herself, and thinking of St. Joseph. We should always be making little sacrifices. This is opposite to the spirit of the world, which is selfishness and forgetfulness of others.

3. Our Lord worked as a carpenter. He was unhonoured and despised. Learn from Him great conformity to God's Will. Learn also love of manual work.

In order to love it we must consider how every act has its own separate reward. Oh! of what great value is the labour of each day in Religion! The greatest evil that could befall the Institute would be any dislike for manual work; rather we should cherish it and pray that its spirit may be ever in full vigour in the Institute. Ponder our Lord's spirit of exactness and perseverance, and be always industrious. Go steadily through your spiritual duties when in aridity, and when Jesus is heavy carry Him patiently, and when you set Him down He will carry you. Cultivate the spirit of recollection in God's holy temple, and a true spirit of detachment; and thus will you walk in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth.

CONSIDERATION.

On Religious Life.

Let us begin this Consideration by begging light to know the value of our Rules, and the great love our Lord has shown in giving them to us. One of our greatest safeguards is love and fidelity to our Rules; and so our greatest danger is to be indifferent to them, and one to which, perhaps, we are often exposed. Let us then think more of the necessity and the advantage. The first because they are the means God has given us, and if we spurn them we cannot expect others. The second, because they are the easiest, and a most easy way to *Sanctity*.

The motive of all should, of course, be the love of God, since this gives greater merit to every act of virtue than if for the sake of the virtue itself. We have no safety without a generous resolution on this point: since, although the Rules do not indeed themselves bind under sin, yet we are bound to aim at perfection, and who can say which Rule may be excluded from this? They ought to be our greatest comfort; putting us ever in the perfect way without trouble, and affording us so many easy means of gaining an incalculable degree of merit. The manner of keeping them, therefore, should be *exactly*, simply, and sincerely, as well as constantly.

We cannot keep our Rules without self-denial; and there is a danger when thinking of the necessity of self-denial for perfection, that we see in five minutes so much to overcome that will require

sacrifice, that we say this cannot be for me. I am not meant to attempt such a thing. I am not called to it. We do not reflect that if we are only faithful to the grace actually present, we can never say whither it may not lead us. Self-denial in case of great repugnance must begin by acts of faith, *looking on Jesus, who having joy set before Him, endured the Cross.* If we do this, we must by our intellects acknowledge that self-denial is the best thing; we cannot see Him in the Blessed Sacrament without feeling a confidence that He will help us, and at the end He will move us to begin, and encourage us to persevere.

The end of religious life is two-fold: our own salvation—the one thing necessary, which gained, all is gained, which lost, all is lost—and the salvation of our neighbour. How sublime is this end, how fervent should be the labour we give to it! Let us think of the words of St. Paul: that others labour hard that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one. We are quite as much bound to labour for this end, by giving mutual edification, as in apostolic work. We cannot be too earnest in trying to make the time of recreation a religious and meritorious one. Meditation on our high vocation, too, will give us fresh courage to take up with vigour the work of self-denial; let us remember the bold saying of a holy Jesuit, that by patient fidelity in the small acts of self-denial we meet with, we *tire out the Holy Ghost.* He presently sends us some glorious opportunity accompanied by wonderful grace, the correspondence to which will

secure our perfection. So that trusting in our God, we will go bravely on.

We will now consider that kind of affection we have for spiritual things. Let us listen to à Kempis —"To what end thou camest hither, . . . was it not to become a spiritual man?" Spiritual duties are essential to our own perfection and salvation. They are equally so as regards the second end of our vocation, the help of our neighbour, for it is *solid* virtue we are bound to strive after.

Clever and highly educated Religious who are not spiritual are of little use. It is from our interior life that all efficacy on our apostolical labours will flow, because they are purely supernatural. To resolve that we will perform this or that pious work will never make us saints. Our resolution must be to renew fervour and fidelity in prayer and self-denial; the two arms by which we are to win, meditation and examination, especially need our vigilance; because if they are well done they secure all else, and also because the danger of routine and tepidity and necessity of effort on our part with these is much greater.

Now, as regards our intention.

Intention is the soul of our actions; if they are performed without any, they are of no more value than those of an animal; if they are for a bad end, however good the action may be, it is sinful; and however small and insignificant, if done for the love of God and desire of His glory, they are meritorious. It is almost bewildering to reflect how great is the merit that *may be gained and that may be lost* each

day,—each hour of our lives. Let us see how this stands in our own case. There is a great danger in religious life in the present day—that of being *natural*, merely natural; of forgetting and ignoring the supernatural element, which ought to be our very existence. We study, we teach, we serve the poor; what are we doing? Are we the same as seculars who do each and all of these things? Oh no! *we* are saving souls! And yet, how often do we forget this! And, if we feel weariness and disgust at the drudgery that must accompany such offices, if we seek willing refuge in foolish conversation, or shirk, as far as may be, some unpleasant duty, is it not because the *end*—the intention—is forgotten? if we kept the *souls* of those we teach, or take care of, in view; if we loved their souls, prayed for their souls, and laboured for their souls, how far, how very far would such imperfections be from us! Let us conclude where we began, by an earnest prayer for some slight knowledge of the length, the breadth, the height, the depth of the supereminent charity of Jesus Christ.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

1. Man's life is a warfare. We must serve either God or the devil. We must be either sisters of Jesus Christ, or belong to His adversaries.

There have been perhaps more women distinguished in battling for God than men. In the life of our dear Lord, it is singular that those who were not afraid, and who stood by Him were

women—thus is virtue perfected in infirmity. The spirit of Christians should be that of valiant soldiers of Christ Jesus.

If we could only see the devil in his own true colours, we should fly from him—the misery is, we do not see his real nature—wealth is indifferent to us, but he likes to see us gulp down praise and honour. If he cannot succeed in this way with some, he tries love of attainments—they think less of God and are on the brink of ruin, and a breath would blow them over into the abyss.

2. We are told that it was during this meditation which was dictated to him by our Blessed Lady (as she also did that of the Kingdom of Christ), that St. Ignatius was inspired with the idea of the Society. Is it not a dreadful thought that the zeal of bad people should excel ours? Some of them are very missioners in their self-forgetfulness and simplicity of purpose, unflagging beneath every reverse. And may we not also say that the truly jealous for our Lord are soon counted? There are some, indeed, true to the backbone; but how many build with one hand and pull down with the other, and thus cause scandal!

3. Down, down, down then, if you would do what God has sent you here to do, the work for which He has called you to Religion. Be the lowest, the last—the least. Think of the grand old Orders with their austerities, silence, abstinence, disciplines, and sackcloth. You have not this to do, but in one sense you have more to do, and we now see what that is more fully, let us pray and desire more and more to be fervent.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Three Classes of Men.

1. To be in the first class, is to be like a soldier, who enters, indeed, the King's service; but is not willing to suffer inconvenience by reason of such service. He makes, therefore, frivolous excuses to escape from duty, and when compelled to enter the battlefield, flies. He is a picture of the wretched Religious who wishes to serve God, but can never assume courage to deny himself in anything; who drags along his life of tepid misery, until he either is awakened by the horror of mortal sin, or perhaps goes blindly to the grave, or abandons his vocation.

2. The second class. Here is one ready to do and to suffer for his King; but he must himself prescribe when, where, how, and how much. This is the most common class in the world, and in every religious body, far more numerous than the first; it is on this class that our chief consideration should begin. These are afraid to trust themselves to God, for fear He should carry them too far, who weigh the orders of Superiors, to see whether too great a perfection be not expected of them; who murmur; who, if they grant the execution through fear, never yield the will and judgment; whose poverty is of so delicate a nature that no inconvenience may result from it; who are a burden to themselves, a burden to their Order, a burden to the faithful, to whom, instead of being shining lights, from which they

may learn to be encouraged to serve God, they become stumbling-blocks and scandals.

3. If we find, as may be, that the very sacrifice which God asks is what we most dread to give, which we have avoided in our meditation as a sensitive sore we dread to probe, let us remember St. Ignatius' advice on the "Election." When one making the Exercises feels a repugnance to the counsels, he is to pray that God will rather choose him for that state, in order to counterbalance that repugnance and restore a holy equilibrium to his mind. So, now, we too should pray that God at least will, in His own way, by His sweet and efficacious grace, bring us to that very perfection for which He is pleased to design us. To exhort all to pray for the Cross is, indeed, what no prudent director would do; but this may—nay, must be—enforced, that we pray for a *love* of the Cross. For, if we abandon that, to what end is our profession of a life of perfection? May we not sit down, and tear out half the pages from our rule-book—if we cease to desire to love Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Baptism of our Lord.

St. Matt. iii. 1—17.

1. Now, let us look at the parting between our Lord and His Mother. It is time for those two blessed ones to separate. What must have been the feelings of our Blessed Lady in parting with her

Divine Son! What a generous large heart she had! She rooted out every trace of selfishness. What a lesson of detachment! From her we learn thoroughness. Take up this idea with respect to anything God wants to be sacrificed in the way of some particular attachment. Will you refuse anything God asks you to give up? Give up the treasure that you cling to; and be quite sure that God will bless you.

2. Now look at our own dear Lord. He goes away with a smiling face, and where do we find Him? Amongst sinners. O blessed humility, here is the substantial sanctity of Heaven. Have I this spirit of humility? How often do we put on an appearance of humility, gentleness, and charity, when we have not got them!

It belongs to the pure heart and mind to see God. The more we try to avoid faults, to cultivate purity, and dear holy innocence, the nearer we shall draw to God, and the more familiar we shall be with Him: and if we try to avoid deliberate venial sin, it is wonderful what familiarity we have with God. Sometimes God may call on you to do things in which there is an appearance of honour and glory before the world; but you can always keep yourselves in humility, and disavow any feeling of vanity or self-complacency that may arise in you after the example of Blessed John the Baptist.

3. Let us contemplate this great Saint, he of whom our Lord said that he was greater than any born of women. He was set aside, and chosen in a special manner; and are you not chosen by God?

I have chosen you, He says; and are you not set aside by God for His special service? After the birth of St. John the Baptist, people said, "*What an one, think ye, shall this child be!*" Cannot the angels say thus of those entering Religion? How have we corresponded with the graces we have received? *And the child grew, and was strengthened in spirit.* Can this be said of us? How have we profited by the graces of religious life? Have we been generous in penance, and made use of our silence as a true solitude? If so, then we shall be ready for the time appointed, as St. John was, to witness and show forth to others the greatness of our Master, Christ Jesus.

✠ CONSIDERATION.

How to attain Sanctity.

What is that blot in us that we must erase, as an obstacle to our imitating Jesus Christ?

There is nothing extraordinary or difficult in sanctity. What, then, is real sanctity? It is something which is possible to every one of us, and consists in trying to imitate our dear Lord; and so wonderful is Christ Jesus that He can be imitated by all. And, in this imitation, never separate Him from Mary; Jesus and Mary must go hand in hand in our lives. Jesus is the perfection of sanctity, and Mary the imitator of it. What strikes us in the lives of Jesus and Mary? Apparently, everything in their lives is most ordinary. It is the manner in which their actions were done, not the actions themselves, in which their sanctity consisted.

The just man lives by faith. Let us see well what this means. All have faith, yet how differently! In one, how faint and illegible the lines! how little they serve to guide him! in another, how deep, how lively, strong, real, and efficacious! This difference is the result of different degrees of application to, and success in, prayer; for it is by prayer that these lines are graven; by it we learn to put on Jesus Christ and His maxims, to form a due sense of the presence and majesty of God, and rightly to esteem the visible things we are surrounded by.

Evangelical perfection may be attained by diligence in prayer, and not by other means says St. Aloysius. By fidelity to prayer, says St. John Berchmans, we secure our vocation. If we learn to love Jesus Christ wholly, we shall be faithful in keeping our Rules. Let us think how many saints whose example is set before us were sanctified by these Rules.

They are the voice of God in our regard; if an angel came visibly from God to acquaint us with the Divine Will, we should certainly hesitate long ere we were unfaithful. Is it less certain now?

We acknowledge the necessity of imitating Jesus Christ, for our salvation's sake. It is by the Rules we do this; they are the interpreters of His life to us; if we keep them, we shall indeed imitate Him most faithfully. The mortification they impose is really the least possible form of suffering we can endure; for assuredly we must suffer. If here we avoid suffering, it is, alas! only to lay up an infinitely heavier burden in Purgatory.

The merit we gain by observance of our Rules is so great that we should indefinitely decrease the debt of punishment, if we were constant and faithful in the small amount of self-denial which the Rules exact. If we are tempted to give up our prayers, to delay commencing our examination, to speak this or that, let us say, No, this is my penance, let me pay it; if not now, how much more in Purgatory!

Devout Communions help us in attaining this love for Jesus Christ. Are we full of faith and confidence in Holy Communion? are we filled with gratitude for this gift? When we ask how it happens that so many Religious, after multiplied years in God's service and constant reception of the holy sacraments, remain so far from the perfection of their state, spiritual writers tell us it is for want of preparation and thanksgiving for Communion.

There is another great obstacle to attaining sanctity—human respect.

Spiritual writers often advise us not only to review our thoughts, words, and actions, but to watch the motives which have prompted them as an index to self-knowledge; and those who follow the advice find much fruit from the practice—for where, perhaps, all seemed well, much imperfection and many faults are discovered. St. Ignatius, accordingly, is constant in asking from his children this scrutiny and purification of their motives, and directs them in all things to seek God, as the end and motive of all. In truth, by no other way can we discover the influence which human

respect has retained over us; and the importance of this is as great as the evil occasioned by merit destroyed, piety perverted, and God dishonoured; for when, for the sake of the opinion or approval of some one we break our Rules, we are really dishonouring God by an outrage which it is hard to exaggerate.

In the world, people are slaves to human respect: the servant who depends, together with his wife and family, upon his employer for maintenance and for comforts, dares not offend him, even to serve his God; the gentleman dares not approach the sacraments, for fear of ridicule; the soldier dares not avoid bad associates, or refrain from evil conversation; the son dares not obey his father, nor pay him ordinary respect, lest by his fellow-youths he be held to be a child, or baby. In Religion, however, we have not any of the excuses which these poor souls might allege, dependent, as we are, upon no one, and surrounded by those who have publicly, voluntarily, and solemnly taken the same engagements as ourselves, and who have all sworn to aim at all the perfection of their state. We have overcome greater things, the regrets of friends when we left the world, the pangs of quitting home and kindred. We have renounced all that is precious in the world, to accept poverty, labours, and most complete dependence on the will of another. So complete is the sacrifice, that it is called a holocaust, and most justly so. We have successfully resisted all the assaults of the devil, who fought with a violence proportioned to the value of the prize. Shall we, now, for the gratifi-

cation of a creature, for the false esteem of a poor worm like ourselves, reject the God we have done so much to gain? Let us have done, then, with human respect, negligence in prayer, infidelity in keeping Rules; and, by the intercession of the great Saints we have thought about, and our own earnest efforts, strive to love our good God and Lord with all our hearts, and minds, and strength.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Woman of Canaan.

St. Matt. xv. 22—28.

1. We see in this story how God deals with souls. He likes us to trust Him without seeking for payment. When we make bargains with God, and say we will go so far and no farther, we are asking for payment. The woman who came and begged for the cure of her daughter was a faithful soul. Her child was stricken with fever, and possessed by a devil. If she had sat in her miserable cabin and repined; if she had murmured, saying, "Why am I not rich? I have always been poor, and now my child is possessed by a devil," she would have gone to our Lord, and said, "They say you are God; if you *are*, come and cure my child," and our Lord would have passed her by unnoticed. But she had prepared her soul by humility, and our Lord knew her faith. She heard Him say, "I was not sent for those like her." Still she calls after Him in her rough way, and breaks through the disciples, and those following Him, to cast herself at His Feet.

2. The disciples despise her, and tell Him to send her away. Oh, *who* can bear to be despised? but see now how our Lord is going to deal with her. How the disciples are watching when He tells her He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs! How they look on, almost breathless, to see the effect of His words! But that is nothing to the yearning, palpitating, trembling of our Lord's Heart, as He watches her soul, and looks into her eyes as she lifts them in humble supplication to His. And thus He looks at each one of us, to see how we shall accept a cross He is going to send us, or a sacrifice He asks of us. And now listen to her answer, and observe the wonderful humility which drew Him down to her. *Lord, the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their masters.*

3. Those who write on the perfection of the religious state, and especially those who write of the Sacred Heart say: After our Lord has led a soul through the common paths of religious life and she has corresponded faithfully, He offers her some peculiar trial which will require an heroic sacrifice, which, if accepted generously, lifts her up for ever from the path of mediocrity, and fixes her in the glory which her fidelity has won.

We should never dwell on the good we have done, or the crosses and trials we have endured. We know when we indulge those thoughts what unhappiness they bring us. Whenever we think of what we have done, without doubt our generosity is coming

to an end. This poor woman bore humiliation bravely, and it brought her a great reward: and we may be sure, if we bear humiliation with courage, we too shall rejoice and be glad in God's good time. And to this poor suppliant the words were spoken which echo throughout the ages: *O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt!*

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Good Shepherd.

St. John x. 11—16.

1. Progress essentially consists in drawing close to God. It is an insult to God to be always looking back on past sins which are washed away. The highest kind of compunction is the outpouring of a loving heart. We go from love to compunction, and not from compunction to love. We ought to throw self away, and to have confident and loving hearts. Let us now consider our dear Lord under the figure of the Good Shepherd. Some of you, perhaps, know what a weary journey you have caused Jesus Christ to take, that He might find you. Actually He seeks the lost sheep, places it on His shoulder, and carries it home. Our dear Lord journeyed a long way to find you. He longs to nourish you with His own Body and Blood; He takes you upon His shoulders, and bears you to the fold. Will you stay there? Is it the extravagant raving of a pious man to say God is in love with you? Great as the mystery of the

Blessed Trinity is the mystery of God's love. The whole of God seems to be concentrated in charity.

2. Resolve, then, to study Jesus Christ; to occupy your minds with Him. There was no reserve in Jesus Christ. The last outpouring of love was when St. John lay on His Breast; when His Heart seemed, as it were, to empty itself out. What a blessing it would be for us if we only knew Him! The only standing-point for humanity is the God-Man. Interest yourselves to bring others to the fold. It does not require great learning or great influence. Every one of you can be an apostle. It is not impossible to influence others by example. Jesus Christ looks to the sheep of His fold to bring others into it, that there may be one fold, under one Shepherd.

If you look at our Blessed Lord with mistrustful eyes, you will estrange men from God. This thought will induce you to put away mistrust. Pray that you may know Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd, and be grateful for all He has done to prove Himself to be *your* Good Shepherd. You have been singled out in the sheepfold—think how easily you can fortify yourselves with the sacraments. A mother feeds her child with milk from her breasts only until it is weaned; but from the Good Shepherd we shall never be weaned, and perhaps our last food in this world will be His Body and Blood.[1]

3. Many graces are coming down in big showers on you. The grace of our God comes down on all

[1] "So his last food on earth was the Bread of Angels."—*Memoir of Father Dignam, S.J.* p. 459.

the Church like soft rain, but like a torrent on you who are called in a special manner to be the intimate friends of our Lord. Try, then, to realize these words, *I am the Good Shepherd;* and when Christ Jesus points out to you some little sacrifice to make for Him, listen to His invitation, and you will not be alone; for, sooner or later, if only on their death-beds, you will bring others to the fold under the Good Shepherd.

When we have been wounded and faint, straying away from Him, He gently probes the wound; sometimes He gives pain for the moment; but then our dear, dear Lord pours in balsam and feeds and refreshes us with His own Body and Blood. He tries to give you graces and the knowledge of Himself; and now He wants you to follow Him more nearly, and to draw others to the fold; and may God grant you the grace to draw many souls to the fold of Jesus Christ!

✠ SECOND MEDITATION.

The Two Betrayals.

St. Luke xxii. 47, 48; 55—62.

1. These two incidents, like all others in the Passion, have a two-fold purpose for us, to quicken our hearts to love our Lord and to offer some great lesson for our instruction. We see our Divine Master in our flesh, as He was in the Garden of Olives, when He beheld, with such an agonized Heart, His miserable Apostle approaching to consummate the work of his treachery. What will our hearts say to Him? Will they sympathize? will

they love Him? love what He loved? hate what He hated? And, for instruction, does not the thought occur to us, when did Judas first give entrance to this awful design into his heart? In the beginning he was as fervent as the others,—at least, we have no reason to doubt it, and this change did not come all at once; *little things* were the beginnings, if, in his life or ours, anything is little, which it is not. No! in the repayment of so great a love, everything is great; and if any one is not thoroughly impressed with this thought, then he too may become a Judas. Yes; if we could see how his heart began its change, we should read the explanation of many a mysterious, unaccountable thing which our own eyes have seen, our own hearts deplored.

2. St. Peter denied his Master; and yet, how lately had he protested he would never leave Him! that he would die for Him! Could the enemies of our Lord have conceived, not to say hoped, to see such a triumph as this? the chief of His followers repudiating Him! We are offering our consolation to the same Lord, our promises, our vows; how long will it be before we take the second step in the humiliation of the recreant Apostle? how long before we, too, deny Him? We do not, indeed, imagine that we are going here to lay down our tendency to sin. We know that these feelings, which we now, by the grace of God, are able to present to Him, will change. The very nature of the Retreat we are making tells us so. They are not new emotions to us, we have felt them before. We have experienced the change; but this

we are to do: to strengthen our souls in them, to consider the past, to find the occasion of their extinction, to consider the future, to foresee the dangers it will offer us; in a word, to do all that St. Peter neglected to do, that we may avoid his fall.

3. Our Lord derived comfort in His Passion from the thought that we should be faithful in spiritual duties in time of desolation; and thus He was consoled by knowing that the fruits of His Passion were not thrown away. Oh, then, let us be very faithful in the future, that we may not disappoint His Sacred Heart!

And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter.

How these words show the tenderness of the Sacred Heart! No word of reproach, only a look from those gentle eyes, that Peter had so loved, and the work was done; and contrition, with its deep humility, took possession of St. Peter, making him a model of repentance for ages to come. Peter went out and wept bitterly. How often has our Lord looked into my heart? Have I wept bitterly,—at least, with the tears of the soul?

✠ CONSIDERATION.

Religious Perfection.

St. Anselm had a vision in which he saw the world under the form of a sluggish, turbid river, full of mud, and beside it, a beautiful castle, with a garden filled with choice flowers, which figured religious life, and the virtues that flourish therein.

Peace is the natural result of religious life; if it is not perfect, the fault is in ourselves, and can be removed by ourselves. Consider, then, the sanctity of religious life; the Church has surrounded it with careful laws and regulations, not to make it holy, but because it is holy. Sin here assumes a different hue; the places, persons, and things are all consecrated specially to God and are defiled by sin. Let us have deep compunction for all sins committed in religious life.

Another motive for aiming at perfection in religious life is that almost the entire fruit of our labours for the help of others depends on this. If we are not interior Religious, our work is barren, and thrown away.

The kind of devil that can only be cast out by prayer and fasting is very common indeed. It may not unfrequently happen that we may labour with great interest, whether it be for the conversion of a soul, or the attainment of some good work, and all in vain, because some fault remains uncorrected, or the renunciation of some inordinate affection has not been made, and therefore we cannot obtain this favour from God. We know that Almighty God punished many for the faults of few, and of even one; Achab and David are examples of this. Whenever anything goes wrong in a religious community, each one should look to herself, and ask whether God is saying: Thou art the guilty one.

We should cherish with great devotion the practice of renewal of our vows, and do it always with great joy, and feel we are celebrating a glad

festival and joyful anniversary. People in the world celebrate with external rejoicings the birthdays of those they love, and the anniversaries of happy events; and yet, assuredly, they have not as much cause to be glad as we have. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi speaks of the happiness of those who take ever new delight in renewing the sacrifice they had made of themselves to God. St. Alphonsus Rodriguez found special sweetness in the renewal of his vows, which he made every day at Holy Mass, and at length he received a special revelation from our Lord Himself, to tell him how pleasing the practice and the thanksgiving which accompanied it for the grace of vocation were in His sight, and what great graces they drew down on him. There is a story told of a holy and learned Jesuit, who was much tempted to dislike this practice of renewal of vows which exists in the Society of Jesus; it seemed to him an unnecessary formality, and a sort of reflection on the stability of those who made the renewal. On one occasion he had the greatest disgust and repugnance for this act; but, for the love of obedience he conquered himself, and suspended his judgment. He renewed his vows according to custom, while the priest held the Sacred Host before him; and he saw our Lord sensibly present in that Host, and received at the same time the clearest light of the great merit of the action, while his soul was flooded with consolation. Let us, then, cherish all the customs of our holy vocation, and thank God unceasingly for having called us thereunto.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Jesus Crowned and Pierced for us.

St. John xix. 2—34.

1. *And platting a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.* Jesus, King of the Jews and King of Heaven, was crowned. This was the crown His people gave Him, who had ever been meek and humble of heart. O my soul, hast thou no share in this dread insult? hast thou never entered His temples, and bowed the knee before Him, with a heart far from Him? hast thou not proclaimed loudly thou wert His disciple, and then disobeyed His commands? *Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord.*

2. One of the boldest with a spear opened His Side. His Mother was the first to adore that wounded Heart, and as she did so, the sword went through her own soul, and thus close was the union between the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In all my trials and temptations, let me *look on Him whom I have pierced*, but whose loving Heart is ever open to me.

Joseph of Arimathea begged the Body of Jesus. All is over. Our trials and temptations are very short, they must end with our lives; and what are they? *Our days on earth are but a shadow.* And at last His lifeless Heart was pillowed on the breast of her who gave Him birth. *The wicked cease from tumult and the wearied in strength are at rest.* The Divine Body of our Lord lying dead upon His bier,

teaches us three lessons. It was motionless—He made no resistance. Do we lie still under our cross? do we resist the will of God manifested to us by Superiors?

It was united to God. Is my body used in the service of God, wearied out by doing His will?

It was fragrant with sweet odours. Do I resemble Jesus Christ by the sweet odour of virtue that hangs about me? do I remind others of my Master whom I serve?

3. *And there was Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.* As long as it was possible, these holy women kept watch at the sepulchre. In the tabernacle, where Jesus is hidden, we possess far more than was held by the holy sepulchre. Do I watch before it with diligent love? Does my heart ever turn towards my Lord in His Sacrament, as these hearts turned towards His sepulchre?

He humbled Himself even unto death. He went through that last great humiliation which we must all undergo; and God hath exalted Him. Let me try to be buried with Him, that I may rise with Him.

EIGHTH DAY.

✠ FIRST MEDITATION.

The First Easter Day.

St. John XX. 1—21.

1. *And while it was yet dark.* Before all others Jesus appeared to His Blessed Mother. St. John says, *Many other signs also did Jesus which are not written*

in this book; and, as St. Ignatius says, "Scripture supposes us to have understanding." *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy consolations have made my soul glad.* This, then, is the *measure* of our Lady's joy, her sorrow was *great as the sea.* Beneath the Cross she *gave*, and now *it is given* to her overflowing.

2. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?" Jesus said to her, "Mary!" One word from that voice of tender love she knew so well, and Magdalen's tears are gone; her soul is overflowing with bliss. How tender is the Heart which loved Magdalen, and which loves all His elect!

Let us pause to wonder at the unselfishness of Jesus, even now, that it well might seem He had done enough for men, and might repose. He was busy in consoling those who were thinking of Him, turning their sorrow into joy. If I, too, love Him, it is of me that He has caused it to be said, "Behold, I have graven thee in My Hands."

3. *Jesus stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.* He wanted to comfort all hearts, and His greeting was, *Peace be to you.* This, then, is His gift to us—*peace.* Earthly happiness He does not promise; but peace He gives, and peace all can have who learn of Him to be meek and humble of heart. *He showed them His Hands and His Side.* For all eternity the five Wounds He bore for love of us shall shine like stars; His Heart was open to us for evermore, and for us, as well as to Himself, will one day be said: Behold His reward is with Him!

SECOND MEDITATION.

By the Lake of Tiberias.

St. John xxi. 1—13.

1. The Pasch was over; the disciples went back to their ordinary life, working for their daily bread, and the first thing they met was disappointment. How often when we go back to our daily toil, after a Retreat, or some time of spiritual fervour, it seems that if we could stay always in our Lord's presence all would be well with us; but are we ever away from Him? *But, when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* And, so, all the night His Heart was watching them. Their labour, disappointment, weariness, were all noticed by Him. And thus it is with us; our days of labour, our early rising when it is hard, our vigils by the sick. He watches them all. Our disappointments are meted out by Him; and is it not when the morning is come that we meet Him at meditation and the Holy Sacrifice? He is there; but, alas! too often our poor hearts know not that it is Jesus!

2. *The disciple whom Jesus loved said, It is the Lord.* The virgin soul is always the first to discern our Lord. *The clean of heart shall see God.* St. Peter cast himself into the sea; the ardent love of the penitent flies to the waters of penance. Can I cast myself into the waters of humiliation, that I may reach Him who is meek and humble of heart?

As soon, then, as they came to land, they saw hot

coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them, Come and dine.

See the seven disciples sitting round the fire which our Lord had made; and He, serving them, as Religious do in their refectory. Even in His risen glory, Jesus Christ cannot give up the humility He loved so much; and can I shrink back from rendering Him a lowly service? Then we will pray, "Let thy servant be exercised in Thy life, for there is my salvation and true sanctification."

3. While the disciples were toiling for Him, our Lord was preparing their rest and refreshment. Has He not said to us, *I go to prepare a place for you?* We shall never meet Him by the Lake of Tiberias; but we shall, if we persevere in His service through the night of the world, find Him waiting for us, His children, on the bright shore of eternity; where He shall wipe away all tears, and rule us Himself, and lead us to the waters of eternal life.

✠ CONSIDERATION.

On the love of Jesus Christ.

If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema. We are called to be Religious. Is it not true that we are devoted to the acquisition and diffusion of the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ? It becomes, then, a mystery how this knowledge and this love are found so faint and weak in us, only to be explained when we consider the study we have made of Him, His life, His doctrines, virtues, and benefits, by the remembrance of the

baneful power of external things over all the impressions of faith. This, then, the centre and core of our internal life, requires renewal like all the rest.

What does faith teach us? That His Soul is supremely enriched with grace, the masterpiece of God, His form and aspect beautiful beyond the children of men, for whom all ages had longed with so vast an expectation, yet whose coming more than fulfilled all that the most sanguine and enthusiastic had hoped or dared to pray for. We know the power of His voice which bade the sea be calm, and His disciples to leave all and follow Him, and of His look which neither time nor events nor even the greatness of his own contrition could banish from the mind of Peter. We see Him cherishing little children; and lest we should be abashed by the memory of their innocence, He shows us His patient love for His Apostles, His diligent instruction of His people by every kind of parable; His forgiveness of Magdalen, His submission to His enemies. Oh, do we not say sometimes that we know not what books to use for meditation, or for our spiritual reading? While we have His life, His words, what can we wish for more? are they not enough? are they not suitable? This love of Jesus Christ was held in the times of the early Church to be all that was necessary for the subject of an Apostle's words. Jesus—He had ordered this—He had given an example of that—no more was thought of; and in the earliest of the Fathers we find the same. This is the keynote of the Exercises of St. Ignatius, this is our apostolate. If we feel this,

if we speak this, it will never be in vain. How much more, then, must we be assured, now that we are working especially for ourselves, that this knowledge and this love are renewed in us, and we must not only become again what we were, but pass from that to greater and better things.

The highest love for Jesus Christ is the natural expression of the heart of man. This love fully satisfies the natural craving of the heart for happiness.

Our Divine Lord asks us to love Him with our whole hearts. We see the justice of this love, of this demand upon our hearts; we know that the early Christians were so impressed with the idea, that nothing more was thought of amongst them; it ought surely to be so with us.

Let us think, too, of the safety which this love promises us; and, indeed, what other safety can there be from venial sin, or even from mortal sin? Impressed as we must be with the knowledge of the justice with which this love is demanded of us by the Sacred Heart of our God, how can we hope for safety? how can we hope for the graces which are necessary to it while we are selfishly refusing Him our hearts? Shall we meditate still further on the happiness of this love? Have you ever known a man who loved Jesus Christ with his whole heart? See St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier! the world did not think them happy; it deplored the sufferings, the labours they seemed to undertake so madly. Do we do the same, or can we form an idea of their hearts, inundated with happiness such as only God can give? How long is it since they died? three

hundred years! three hundred years of glory and bliss in the presence of God! and what are three hundred years compared to eternity? Oh! if God calls upon one amongst us to-night to become an Aloysius, let us not fear, let the answer be a generous one.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Gift of God.

St. John xiv. 16.

1. Let us see our Lord, as He stood amidst His Apostles, about to ascend to Heaven, and hear Him say: *I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive.* The world is a coward; the blind slave of human respect; it trembles to fail or be laughed at, or to suffer. The Holy Ghost, whom the world cannot receive, teaches us *to see clearly* these are not evils at all, and makes us strong to endure whatever God permits, and even to rejoice to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. The world is a coward; it knows nothing of generosity; cringes before the strong, oppresses the weak, and gives that it may get. The Holy Ghost teaches us *to see clearly* that the only true loss is to hear the words, Thou hast received thy reward; and, thus enlightened, makes us love nothing but Jesus Christ—but Jesus Christ without bounds, and without any reward; do good to all men, for Jesus Christ's sake.

2. The world is a coward; it is very brave in

prosperity and power, but despairs in the hour of trial. The Holy Ghost, whom the world cannot receive, teaches us *to see clearly* that in the hour of danger God is no less powerful than He ever was, and that without Him all hours are hours of danger; and thus He makes us diligently *use every means* God gives us to help our weakness, yet trusting not in them, but in Him whose gifts they are. Let us pray to the Holy Ghost to bestow on us His gifts, and especially that of holy fear. This is not so common a gift as might be expected; many devout persons have, in reality, very little of it. Holy fear removes any doubt of God's forgiveness when we are sorry for our faults.

3. *It shall be well with them that fear God.* The signs of the fear of God are: a great horror of deliberate venial sin, great reverence and modesty when alone, great simplicity, freedom from shyness and human respect; for those who fear God have no other fear. *Perfect charity casteth away fear.*

And so we must end our Retreat, trusting to that perfect love on which we have meditated so often, and desiring that, by the light of the Holy Ghost, whom the Father hath given to us, we may grow and increase in our love of God, until it shall be made perfect for ever in eternity.

LAST MEDITATION.

The Sacred Heart.

1. *One of the soldiers with a spear opened His Side.* Let us consider the love wherewith Christ Jesus

hath loved us; not *us* only, but *me;* for He loved *me* and delivered Himself for *me*. The source of His love is His Sacred Heart. It is the love of a man loving with the power of a God.

And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord for ever.

What a true picture is this of our High Priest and Mediator! How truly does He bear us in His Heart before the Lord!

As one whom his mother caresseth, so will I comfort you.

Why are we not certain of the sympathy of the Heart of Jesus? No one can know us as our Lord does, because He alone created us.

2. *And a man shall be as when one is hid from the wind, and hideth himself from a storm.*

If our hope be fixed in Jesus, if we love Him, and cling to Him, the storms of life pass us by; we care not for the censures of the world, nor the misapprehension of the good, and we do not fear the fierce storms the devil can raise against us. He takes our part against our foes. No one makes excuses for us, as does Christ Jesus. *Many waters cannot quench love.* Nothing can conquer the love of the Heart of Jesus. If we forsake Him, He does not forsake us. There is no pardon so sure, so certain, so complete as His.

I am come to cast fire upon the earth.

Our Lord asks from us, heart for Heart, that, as He is all for us, so we, in all we do, should love Him, and desire to consecrate ourselves to Him. And, as His love is ignored by men, we should desire to

make Him reparation for that injured love; and, also, that we should propagate the devotion to His Heart; and He promises to those who will do this, that their names shall be written in His Heart.

3. *Always living to make intercession for us.* When the troubles of life press heavily, let me think of these words. *Always*, never absent, never changing; *living*, not tied down by the chains of this mortality, but in the full life of God. The perpetual prayer of the Heart of Jesus, in this will I trust—*In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, alone hast singularly established me in hope.*

Our Retreat is ended, and we must go our different ways.

Mother and children, though seas divide you, yet you must be all one—one spirit, one body; let mutual love, and sweet charity, and perfect obedience, ever keep you united in life, as you will be in eternity.

Helps for making an eight days' Retreat.

NOTE.

It is not without much consideration that the compilers have decided to throw the following fragmentary notes into the form of Retreat.

It is true that they always contain Father Dignam's thoughts, and in many instances his actual words, but at the same time they are of a more fragmentary nature than those of the foregoing Retreats. It has been impossible to place the meditations in the same sequence as in the preceding Retreats, therefore they are entitled, "*Helps* for making an eight days' Retreat," being in fact detached thoughts of the Father's upon the subjects given to us in the Exercises of St. Ignatius. Still it has been thought that it would be more useful to cast them in the natural order in which meditations upon these subjects should follow, and the compilers again remind the readers of this book, that the meditations can only be helpful to those who use them in conjunction with a copy of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (and the Gospels).

PREPARATORY MEDITATION.

Created, and Why?

1. Man was created to *this* end. "What end?" Our one end is to be with God for ever. God gave me out of nothing a wondrous existence which will never come to a close.

Life is a series of steps, each one bringing us nearer the awful moment when we shall kneel at our Lord's feet, and look up into His eyes. Religious ought to be sure of attaining their end; our hands will not be empty at the termination of our lives, but will they be as full as they might be?

2. God made me, made me for Himself; this was His only end in my creation, and I can have no other. Every faculty and capacity in me is for this alone. My happiness then (and my only possible happiness) is the same thing exactly as God's own end in making me. Does it not therefore follow, that every interest of God is no less mine? It is not as when we urge children to be good, and who weigh the *pros* and *cons*—"I shall get this, but I shall have to give up that"—but rather all that is for God is for me also, all that is against His glory *must be*, by the very nature I have, against my own interest no less. God my Creator and I His creature are *so one* that it must be so.

So in Hell—the creature who has lost God, has by it lost himself; he is *empty*, because in turning away from God's interests he renounced everything which was his own.

3. By sin God had lost His creature; the creature in losing God had lost himself by striving to have a self whose interest was separable from God. Therefore God became a creature, that by self-immolation He might repair the guilt which *self-assertion* wrought, and lead the creature to recognize that it had no interest out of God.

God's design for me is not changed, it is still the same—to be happy with Him for all eternity. What is good for God is best for me, and nothing can be good for me if not good for God also. As we were made by God for Himself it is foolishness on our part to do anything that leads us from Him, or to weary ourselves in seeking after, or retaining, that which is not for His glory and our good. To do that which is right is not only what God wishes us to do, which is most important, but better for ourselves, as we shall not be condemned to eternal exile for it. How frequently we hesitate between right and wrong, and put off doing the right thing to some later period; or engross our minds with some thought of our own capability, importance, or superiority; forgetting that all we are, or have, or can have, comes from God, that He made us to love and serve Him, that we are His creatures, and He has a perfect right to us, and that all we refer to ourselves we are taking from Him.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

To give God His due.

1. Man was created to praise God. God being the Creator takes care of the creature. Man says to God, "Thou *must* help me, Thou created me."

We have a difficulty in praising God because we have so little facility in praising our neighbour. Praising means liking, praising others keeps our own organ pipes in tune, it makes a man unselfish and joyous. Praising God heartily, destroys the *dark* side of self, it does away with diffidence, distrust, and discouragement. Each word or thought of praise bestowed on another, is to God a gratefully accepted compliment. Praise is the first duty God requires of us; one who is always praising his fellow-creatures will be high in the Kingdom of Heaven. We are God's creatures, therefore we must praise and reverence Him. Praise springs from gratitude, reverence from submission. We must give God joyful service, joyful sacrifices, joyful praises, indeed without joy it is not praise. The highest seraph is as much bound to bow in utter abasement before God as we poor flickering flames are. He is Creator; we as well as the angels are only His creatures, entirely dependent on Him. We cannot praise God, if we feed upon the defects of our poor Sisters and those around us. Perhaps that Sister whom we in our minds unmercifully pick to pieces, is

destined by God's providence to fill one of the highest thrones in Heaven.

2. We must carefully exclude the slightest thought about another's defects; instead we must learn to feed on the bright, the good, the amiable, the beautiful, and until we do we shall never attain the power of praising God as He deserves to be praised. You have heard all these things before. Why did you not do them then? one *old* thought, which has sunk in deeper, is worth far more than a new one. Depth, not width, is what we want; most saints have been impressed with *one* truth, which formed the ground of their sanctity.

See then how very important it is for each one to cultivate in her own heart the spirit of praise and reverence for *all* her Sisters. Now this is not very easily accomplished, because we do not often hear panegyrics on their virtues, and as a rule we hear a good deal about their faults; but if each one *studied* the good which they know their Sisters possess, and the evil that they know themselves to possess, we should soon arrive at praise and reverence.

3. Reverence. Oh! here we must go on our knees, and say with all the earnestness of which we are capable, "*Lord, that I may see.*" We must reverence God on account of His infinite attributes: His Wisdom, Power, Beauty, Majesty. If His goodness in creating us calls forth our praise, our second thought must be—trembling, to adore. It is holy fear in all its beauty. Its type is the reverence of a perfect child to perfect parents. We revere all that belongs to those we fear on earth. We should

revere all creatures for God's sake, even inanimate ones, and use them with reverence. How happy, how independent of human respect this reverence would make us.

God on His part reverences His creatures. He may punish, but He never treats them with indignity, never takes away their free-will. God himself implants reverence in our hearts; the world hates and tries to remove it. No one can fulfil his duty without reverence, without submission. Without interior and exterior submission and reverence, religious obedience is simply an ugly mask; we must reverence and respect all. Whose vocation is safe for an instant if contempt gain admittance into the heart? The reverence of God removes the *dishonest* side of self, and serving God makes war on the *disloyal* side of self. Reverence to God is the recognition of our creatureship. Reverence to our fellow-creatures is the acknowledgment of one or other of God's attributes which we find in each. We recognize God's power in our Superiors, the Divine election is visible in our fellow-Religious. Reverence takes away the trickery of life. The soul is so intent on the thought of what will God think of that—how will God like this? that she minds no one else's opinion about her.

SECOND MEDITATION.

I am Thy servant.

1. To praise, reverence, and serve God, for this He created us. Now, do we ever say in our hearts

in moments of passion, "I will not serve;" and if we do not go so far, do we render partial service? "I will do so much, but no more." Or again, "If I were serving God, of course I would offer Him a very generous service, but when some stupid little Sister comes and asks me to do something, I cannot offer *her* a generous service." Where then is the spirit of praise and reverence in your heart? If you offer praise and reverence to God, you must do so through His representatives. You cannot have anything more assuring than our dear Lord's own words—"*As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren you did it unto Me.*"

2. How often do we wrongly fasten our minds on the work in hand, instead of on the *service* due to God. Would the Archangel Raphael have been happier as ambassador at Court, than he was while engaged in the menial office of assisting young Tobias; did it matter to him what he did, so long as he was rendering service to God? How can a frivolous character become an interior soul? We should let the truths remain on the mind until they sink in, and finally become a deep conviction. A soul that has *one* such treasure, will go on her way speedily, steadily, and surely. A Religious without a deep conviction will be as the butterfly, flitter, flutter, all day through. Once this truth is grasped, that God made the soul for Himself, that after a few years of swimming through the turbid waters of life, He will draw that soul out and place her in His Bosom for ever, then nothing earthly would any longer make much impression on her. Human

joys would pass unheeded, as too trifling to engage attention. Sorrow and pain would also appear of small consequence. She would pass through this world, pure, free, untouched, simply through the force of this one conviction. Deep-rooted convictions are the *primary cause of an interior life.* Sometimes a soul is drawn to this life on her entrance into Religion; to others the grace comes through humiliations; to others by finding success turn to gall and bitterness. But the normal state of things is the gradual and silent growth of convictions, often imperceptible.

3. There should be no self-indemnification in God's service. Do we never pay ourselves back for hard work, or anything painful to nature, by dispensing ourselves from some rule, or giving way to some passion, something we should not have dared to ask or take, if we had not had the consciousness of having worked hard and successfully? That is self-indemnification. With God, purity of intention is an essential of good service: reflect how we devastate our work, and turn pure gold into dust, by this mixture of motives and self-indemnification. Each act has been recorded by God's angel as *it* was performed.

King David is the brightest example we have of serving God with joy, and giving praise to Him. Though David's sins were so great, he did penance and was heartily sorry for them, and began again to serve God with joy; and we brood over little wrongs, and seem to study how to make ourselves thoroughly miserable, and every one around us. We not only grieve over what causes us trouble,

but over all that has been said and done to annoy us. We seem to think our Lord would be indignant, if we came to Him with a sunny joyous spirit. Our life affords us ample opportunities for serving God with joy, for it is a life filled with mortification and labour, and this is always productive of spiritual joy, for the life of a carnal man is a stranger to it; though we *may* enjoy the pleasant things of this world and still have spiritual joy as David had. Our Lord loves a cheerful giver and hates a grudging service. We do not make use of the means for obtaining joy; we say we wish for it and that is all, and we go on in the same miserable, dumpy manner as before. Now let us be what God loves, "cheerful givers," true to His service and not to the service of self.

THIRD MEDITATION.

God's Gifts.

1. The degree of the service of God differs in each soul according to its attitude, its dispositions of heart, towards God. The million acts that fill the day of a soul permeated with praise and reverence, though in the commonest work of life, may be infinitely more glorious to God, than the acts of a soul given to mortification, prayer, or apostolic labours. This attitude of the soul gives them all their value. How we ought then to pray for light that our convictions may be deepened, and that we may praise and revere God's creatures, those especially that come to us apparently from the will, or whim, or caprice of others—or even their malice, and welcome them with faith, stamped as they are

with the seal of His providence, and marked with His love, which has weighed them all and purposely sent them to us, hoping to find us using our convictions, and receiving them with praise and reverence. If not, what losses in our heavenly treasure, what *blindness*—"*Lord that I may see.*" If we praise and revere creatures we shall have joy, and thus like them supernaturally. Those who are most detached from creatures have the greatest share of enjoyment from them, because those who press too tightly are sure to find thorns beneath, and will inevitably leave them with lacerated hearts.

2. Creatures in themselves are valueless. But when used by God as His messengers they acquire immense importance. They must be looked upon with reverence for His sake. St. John Berchmans is an example of the way to use creatures. Although he loved and esteemed all, especially those in authority over him, referring their power to God, yet in his notes we find him saying, "Creatures are insignificant, they cannot of themselves help or harm me; why then should I mind them?" This is the Saint, who in order to excite love in his heart towards his brethren, wrote down the most striking virtues of each and praised God for His gifts, whenever he came into the company of any Religious.

Injunctions, desires, recommendations—call them what name you like, it matters not—these are so many creatures, by whose means we can in a special manner show our love to God; yes, God takes a real joy and interest in every detail of our community life. It is just by small things that God

will make us great. Any one who can lay her head coolly and calmly on her pillow at night, knowing she has broken recommendations, and intending to do the same to-morrow, cannot be near God. Frailty is a different thing; what particularly displeases Him is calmness and deliberation in despising things trifling in appearance, but not so in reality, when considered as proofs of fidelity in His service.

3. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature.* How valuable is that idea of Father Neumayr's that the imagination is the root of sin. We say we cannot make composition of place for meditation, and yet how we can suffer from lively images of past things. The composition of place teaches us to make the imagination subservient to the will, and by degrees to keep it in order. Tribulations—some one says a word to us; our imagination works it up, our peace is gone. Tribulations—this is the danger of creatures, we have constantly to be on our guard against their danger and deceit. If it is a *real* tribulation, reverence will make us use it for our good. "*Who* shall separate us?" St. Paul recognizes *everything* as a creature, and personifies the inanimate ones—"*Nor principalities*"—the spirits of darkness are permitted to tempt us. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "*Nor height,*" high places, love of office—humiliations. "*Nor things present*"—how often for the present wretched pleasure we

forego the eternal merit! A word in our own praise, which our good Angel says "keep in"—we weakly let out and lose our merit. *Nor depth, nor things to come.* "*I would* humble myself, but I fear the results, I shall be despised"—as if it were not the contrary; we shall only be the more esteemed for humbling ourselves. How full of holy fear we ought to be in our use of creatures. As guests partake of hospitality in measure of the laws of society, so we should use all creatures as they help or hinder us to our last end. Keep *this* before your eyes—the kind person will help us, and the unkind will not hinder us. We must *watch*, for a helping creature we may turn into a hindrance; so prayer, our charge, Superiors, equals, friends, and relations, temptations, consolations, all, all must be used in so far as they further our last end. We should dwell upon this subject, because it does at last convince the intellect and enable us to perform heroic acts easily, not as in other meditations that inflame our devotion but are more transient. Like travellers we should have no peace until we reach our end—Jesus Christ.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Holy Indifference.

1. We can have, if we choose, our life under our own control. Much depends on our likings and dislikings, and our likings and dislikings depend on our will. If we only "will" the things that help

us on to God we shall like them; if we "will" to have nothing to do with those things that hinder our course, we shall inevitably *shun* them.

We have grace to like the duties of our vocation. If we say we cannot, it is an *error*, and error is an abominable thing; we *can* then like our duties, as did St. Aloysius or St. Paul; our *grace d'etat* will make us like what we abhorred—dislike what we loved. Tepidity is a state so abhorred by the saints, because it is returning to the love of worldly things, which we once hated—a renunciation of the duties of our state.

A kind, gentle word from a Religious who *likes* her work often succeeds better than one from a most zealous priest. If, unhappily, we have taken a dislike to our work and vocation we can change our mind and like it again. It is useless to argue that we cannot, or never could change our mind—how was it we were able to change all our likes on entering Religion, giving up all our first and early affections, and perhaps coming among strangers.

2. Sometimes we see Religious who have given up all, now set their hearts upon and cling to ridiculous trifles. Take the thing which has most troubled your peace of mind within the past twelve months, wriggle it out of its hiding-place, hold it up to the light, look at it in its nudity and proper dimensions, and then see how much it is worth. St. Ignatius says we should be indifferent to health or sickness; be it a pain in the head or finger, we must take both alike; riches or poverty, honour or ignominy, being thought little of, snubs, failures,

mistakes; we should not allow the manner of others to have an influence over us, neither should we form a judgment of a person after we may have just suffered a little pain or annoyance from them. So let each Sister find out for herself what she has to learn to be indifferent about. I am so convinced that sanctification must begin by the brains, that instead of trying to touch your hearts, I am stopping at dry meditations, where the mind alone can act. But I know that if I can succeed in getting something into your heads, it will, during the year, turn into food and comfort for your hearts. It is the natural way of all food—from the head to the heart, not from the heart to the head.

3. Indifference to all creatures so long as they help me to my last end, no matter what nature may feel.

Indifference to that which is left open to us. Now come Rules. Never deliberate on that which is once fixed, this lets in temptation, and to turn it out safely is nearly impossible. Now let us see what is fixed—the Commandments, our Vows; and our Rule, although not binding under sin, yet is God's whisper to us, and knowing His wish we cannot choose anything else. Travellers have no real interest in what they look at as they are passing. They are indifferent. A shopkeeper does not love his goods because they are pretty, but only as they further his end. To all else he is indifferent. This is not easy; if we were perfectly indifferent we should never sin. But deepening our convictions as we live on, we shall come to it by degrees.

Any day spent sadly in Religion is sure to be of our own manufacture, as our Lord will prove when He comes to judge us. Those who brood over their sufferings are sure to be sad and discontented. Persons who are staying at an inn when on a journey do not mind what trouble or inconvenience they have to put up with for a short time; we ought to look upon things in the same light—giving our Lord glory by offering up to Him what we have to bear during the night of our exile from Him.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The one great evil.

1. St. Ignatius says, the rebel Angels would not take the trouble to use the means God placed in their hands to ensure their perseverance. They ought to have practised their free-will in acts of reverence and submission; and for want of taking the pains they in a moment became the degraded beings they now are and will remain for all eternity. They sinned but once and have lost *all*.

Adam and Eve sinned but once and had nine hundred years of penance. All the sad things we see, the hard struggles—the wretched condition of the poor, is all the sad consequences of that one sin.

A soul at the judgment-bar, with only one mortal sin to stain it, would be condemned by God to an eternity of pain,—and we have sinned so often.

2. *Our own sins.* This is the centre point of these meditations, which has converted hundreds. Which sin of your life is most stamped with an

open defiance of God? Weigh its malice now. Count up all the sins of your life, earnestly but briefly; look over the sins of your former years—years of childhood, girlhood, early religious life, of later years. We cannot appreciate a sin by the act itself. A day's continual sinning of some poor ignorant fellow does not wound our Lord's Heart as much as one deliberate sin in a Religious.

If you have never offended Him mortally, you have reason for another kind of shame and sorrow, having been so shielded and drawn out of the occasions of sin. Why did you forget that you owed Him a double debt of gratitude and love? Compare your littleness to the majesty of Him whom you dared to offend and feared not to pain. Contrast His sanctity with your vileness and be ashamed of loving Him so little. And why has He borne with you even to the present day? Because He still hoped on—God saw that out of the humiliation of committed sin might be drawn a remedy for your pride.

He allowed it though at the cost of so much suffering to Himself. Rejoice in the humiliation though not in your fall. But instead of now willingly accepting for ourselves the shame and disgrace sin has brought on our souls, we turn away hating them for the shame and humiliation they cause us, forgetting the injury they have done to God; thus we make our act of contrition not for Him, but for ourselves.

3. A nun who can exult over her act of contrition being real and efficacious, who forgetting herself makes an act of sorrow purely for having displeased God's infinite goodness—such a soul has already the

beginnings of humility. Faith in the power contrition has to repair past sins, is what is wanting. No self-complacency is possible when there is true shame —no matter what the future labours, the future sufferings, the future work for souls may be—our sins are a preservation against all self-conceit.

Clothed always in this robe of shame which so becomes us, we have always at hand the means of true contrition. If we could put on this garment of shame, and keep it on, and cling to it, then would our Lord's eyes ever beam on us with love. Shame is a necessity that virtue may be solid. Our sins are *facts*, however much forgiven.

If you resent the shame, there is no possibility for you of an act of perfect contrition. Guard and cherish the shame of your sins, place them as a "bundle of myrrh between your breasts."

Make the triple colloquy to our Blessed Lady, Christ our Lord, and His Eternal Father, and ask for the fruit you need—holy and abiding shame.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Venial Sin.

1. Let us not say that venial sin is nothing—a scruple—rubbish—but look well into ourselves and see if it has any hold upon us. See how we stand with regard to our relations and companions. Venial sins count up and can often drag a soul to the slope that leads down to mortal sin. What are the remedies? Excite in ourselves a deep regret for

venial sin. "*He that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little*," says Holy Writ.

It is true that sins of negligence not fully deliberate cannot be entirely avoided, but they may be diminished. As to deliberate sins we can and we ought to avoid them.

Have a delicate conscience and make your examens carefully. Look at the thorns which encircle the Heart of Jesus and say, "Those are my venial sins." Let us tell Mary, who never committed a sin, that we will thrust no more thorns into the Heart of her Jesus.

2. What is a venial sin of pride? It is shown by a spirit of independence and by criticism, by a desire for the praise and esteem of men, feelings of envy, jealousy, anger, impatience. When we see these sources and roots of pride, then we should go into details with ourselves, and see whether we yield to self-complacency about our talents, or success in our work, and whether we are discontented when Superiors correct us, or our equals or inferiors. Sometimes these corrections will cause sadness or want of confidence—then as we know their root we can correct them; excuses, boasting, resentment because we are slighted and not put in the first place, rash judgments, self-seeking in office or work. In the same way let us look for the root of immortification which is sensuality, and from which proceed idleness and self-indulgence, looking out for our own ease or for the best of things, neglect of custody of eyes, and not rising at the first call, getting out of any little pain or penance. Venial sins are very

often sins of omission, and here come in our spiritual duties, and duties of our charge; are they all fulfilled as they should be?

3. Are our dear and holy vows kept as they should be "in spirit and in truth." Our dear Poverty; do we take care of our clothes? do we waste or break things through negligence? do we desire to have the best of anything, are we most careful not to give, receive, or borrow without permission?

For the angelic virtue, mortification of the senses is required. Are we faithful in this always? Then the cream of all, holy Obedience—do we always obey without murmuring, or defer our execution of an order—do we treat our Rules with reverence? They express God's will for us—hence we keep silence because He wishes it, and we employ our time well because it is *His;* but must not the cry of our hearts ever be: *Turn away Thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.* Are we free from the spirit of the world—or do we in manner or conversation show that we have a liking for it? Are our spiritual duties all right, never neglected or omitted —our attitude in prayer as it should be, our genuflections well made—distractions driven away—vocal prayers well said, and our Office with care? Above all is there any want of charity or respect for each other in manner or words. Do we speak too much or too little, do we tease others, fail in thoughtful consideration, do we criticize—give a sharp word, discuss defects of others? In how many ways we can fail—but in how many ways also can we merit.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

To help our review.

1. Perhaps another meditation on venial sin will help you in your annual review. There must be nothing hidden away in their nooks for want of probing; we know how blind people *can* be. What instances of this blindness can be found among the poor we are well aware. Venial sins may require years of expiation in Purgatory. It is a pity it has to be called "venial," for it is anything but small. This is what it does. It robs God of His glory. It disregards the will of God. It thwarts the designs of Providence. It causes God to punish with unspeakable pains, souls whom He died for, to save from pain. Habits of venial sin are things greatly to be dreaded. Who that has once given way to indulging in sleep after the time to rise has come, but finds out the tyranny of the passion, and thus God loses the first-fruits of the day, while the soul begins *its* day on unfair ground. When we turn God's providence and creatures into means of sin, it is like dragging at our heels the Eternal Wisdom, as they did to our Lord in His Passion.

2. The principle upon which fervour must be founded is the horror of all sin, even the least which is deliberate. Do we find it as fresh, as *real*, in our hearts now as it once was. Who can say so? Yet the truth of God is immutable, and what sin was at

the time we felt its horror so keenly, such is it now, as such we ought to estimate it. The mercies of God aggravate our guilt in indifference to venial sin—think what those mercies are, what they call for from us, whether our daily actions betoken a heart sensible of its true position.

God's punishments are not always the greatest when most striking in their outward manifestation. He is still more to be feared in His internal punishments, the subtraction of His grace—the abandonment of a soul. Let us fear these—nay, let us see them even now acting upon us. If we fled from venial sin, if our souls were pure, how much more fruit could we not bring forth daily, how much more merit might we not acquire daily for eternity? If this object were nearer to our hearts, thousands might owe their salvation to us.

3. Be strict at your self-examination. You *must* make it to acquire self-knowledge. It is to go through it in a business-like manner—impartial, quick, even severe with yourself if you like, but once done, it *is* done—it becomes a thing of the past, and should be despatched. Morbidly dwelling on faults creates unhealthiness in the soul and does no good. Scruples and shame cannot exist together; sorrow always follows true shame; we *trust* God. We must *work* for compunction, sorrow for sin is a most fruitful source of grace, let us make two good acts of contrition every day. What graces a fervent Religious brings down on her community, and of what graces the careless, tepid Religious deprives her community! Do not cast your sins aside as soon as they are con-

fessed and forgiven—grieve over them daily to the end of your life. What shame we ought to experience at having sinned. Our comfortless contrition comes from our not cultivating a spirit of shame.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Place of Woe.

1. The wrong use of creatures causes the loss of souls. No matter how small the object may be in itself—if there is one single thing we prefer to God, we are so far on the road to damnation. No creature looked at in its true light could entice the soul from God. It is the relative value men set on it—a little point of honour, a word which would make a confession clear, or the forgiveness of an injury.

The meditation on Hell should teach a Religious what danger lies in throwing away the least of the safeguards she at present enjoys. Religion is so sure and safe a home, that there is no danger of losing the soul for those who love it and live contented under its happy restraints. You may go on in well-grounded confidence of Heaven at the end. But this supposes that you value its safeguards: rules of modesty, and the rest. It is no use getting in a fright about temptation to mortal sin, which will never come near us—but by despising little things, a Religious may at last come face to face with sin.

2. That Hell exists is a reality. As sure as there is a God in Heaven, so sure is there a place where souls are punished.

We are sitting here comforted by our Lord's

presence, and *they* have lost Him for ever. Their sufferings are useless to us except in so far as they help us to keep steadily on the right path for fear of coming to the same place. Our souls were created to participate in the happiness of God Himself, capable of next to infinite enjoyment;—in Hell the lost soul finds it has missed its end; that end is frustrated, and the soul is frozen, fixed in this eternal loss. It preferred the creature to the Creator, either pleasure, or revenge, or vainglory, be it what it may. This creature turns to nothing, to corruption, and the soul that had become thus enslaved is bound, petrified with this passion for all eternity. Hell shows us what the creature is.

Pains and torments are theirs, but these are only the accidents, the externals. The overwhelming suffering is the solitude. They cannot find God, and yet in the core of man's heart lies the insatiable thirst for Him. The light of God's eyes may never for an instant brighten up that gloom.

3. And to aggravate still further this intolerable solitude comes the bitter consciousness that we have "self" with us. It was to please self that we renounced God, sold our souls, and now this frozen hideous thing with which we pampered self is in our hands, the worm of conscience gnawing at our hearts, and telling us that for so little we have given up an eternity of happiness. And this wretched thing, this "self" and its indulgences, we must hold in our embrace for ever. Say to thy passions when in a state of disturbance and rebellion, "Look at your place in Hell, and there you will go if you do not

obey reason." Take care to esteem rightly the safeguards of Religion. Finish this meditation at our Lord's Feet, for it was to save you from such a doom that He died on the Cross.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Death and Judgment.

1. It seems a paradox, but it is true, that death is the end and the beginning of all things. Most certain—yet uncertain beyond all contrast—it can happen but once; we however should "die daily." The Jesuit vocation we might almost say is to die without the sacraments—certainly to be prepared to do so. John of Avila called no man a Jesuit who was not thus ready. How many are there of us who would not change his course and set about something he is not doing now if he knew he were to die to-morrow—but this is not to *die daily*. All experience of death-beds tells us that people seldom change much then. Is it not St. Charles who tells us of the prince whom he watched beside so long in order to suggest a good thought, and when at last he uttered the word *contrition*, the man was so wearied that he turned his face to the wall until he died. If there is one tepid Communion after another when our Lord has nothing to say to us, and we nothing to Him—the soul is only like Herod face to face with Jesus Christ—this is poor preparation for death. It must be made now, or it will be worth little for us then; prayers are said certainly,

and we say them, or listen to them, *but is there any reality in it?*

What will be our thoughts on our death-beds—what will be the happy thoughts? If we have been detached—have been faithful to our spiritual duties—glad of humiliations, kind to others, and if we had a personal love for Jesus Christ—these will console us. What a terrible reality death is. I am sure some day to face Him, and if I have chosen other things in preference to Him how shall I stand in His sight and alone! What will there be at that hour to dread—the memory of self-seeking, of hypocrisy, of self-will, unkindness, distrust of God?

2. After death comes Judgment. Each thought, word, act, motive, and every hidden core will then be laid bare, and be rewarded or punished accordingly. And "as she has done to the least of these let it be counted as to Myself," this is the decree gone forth from our Lord's own lips. How faithful He will be to this, and how pleased if we will allow Him to be generous to us, and how glad we shall then be to look at the things which cost us so much pain now, if only we use them rightly. How then can we best prepare for the hour of death and Judgment?

Let us consider the three judgments that are passed on us: first men judge us—what is that worth? it passes like the wind—fancy, sympathy, accident influence it. One will think we are angels—others quite the contrary, one hangs upon our words, another can only find food for criticism.

What is the value of it? Yet how largely it

affects the second judgment of us—our own; we are blind about ourselves—even in the most favourable circumstances—at the time of Retreat. We cannot see ourselves as God sees us, even as regards the faults we recall. This being of ours is stamped with God's ownership, consecrated to Him of necessity. To put it to a wrong use is a sacrilege like that of Baltassar when he profaned the sacred vessels. If then we review the sins and miseries of our lives and the inroad the world has made upon our principles, we shall find infinite matter that must be washed away with shame and holy sorrow before that day comes upon us. Then there is the third judgment. Will our Lord say of us, "They have received their reward"? If you did not seek God's glory alone in all your actions, if you worked for your own honour and to be esteemed and praised, and obtained it—you have had your reward, and all your toil has gone for nothing.

3. Never enter the chapel without throwing over your heads the veil of holy shame. Absence of shame causes misunderstanding between God and ourselves. We are unfaithful, and then come and say long prayers, sweet and touching; but He cannot be familiar with us, we have still our infidelity about us. Shame alone creates true understanding. It is our proper attitude. Always take the last, the humblest place, and when He would invite us nearer, let us beg to be excused. Say in answer to His invitation—"Suffer me to remain in my shame, for, casting it aside, I should become self-complacent, and do those things which would cause Thee to

remember what I once was and did." A spirit of shame begets cheerfulness and unselfishness. Let us cherish grief for sin, as something to be offered to our Lord on our first meeting Him. Look at the Magdalen's repentance. By *shame* she turned away from the creature; by *sorrow* she turned to God, and by *aversion* to sin she merited the grace of pardon for her crimson stains, and the sure hope of one day enjoying the bliss of Heaven.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Follow Me.

Exercises, p. 34.

1. Had we seen our Lord calling James and John and known as we know now the love of His Heart, should we not have entreated to be called also? This He has done, but we have been cowards. Self to be overcome was the aim and we were to follow the Lamb, Jesus crucified. We have light but will not see—one spark of generosity, one atom of humility, and the difficulty would vanish. It is impossible to live up to our calling if we take no pains to have a high aim. One who aims low, thinks the Ten Commandments and three vows are enough; that Religious is always in danger, full of venial sins, and displeasing to our Lord. A low aim is politic, so abhorred by the holy Fathers, but alas! it is said to be so common—these Religious are content with exterior obedience, flatter and wheedle and do anything to gain their end, which with shame

they must see is a low one—they cannot bear pious conversation and have no supernatural motives. A high aim is precisely what we have been thinking of in the Foundation—praise and reverence, fearing to abuse creatures and striving to be indifferent. Can we not hear His Voice as He says: *My sheep hear My voice; and I know them and they follow Me.* Let us say when He said that, He thought of *me.*

2. What antics self can play in every corner of a convent! St. John the Baptist, sanctified by our Lord's presence in Mary, is a perfect image of a soul sanctified by seeing our Lord's presence in creatures. We make for ourselves too low theories of perfection, of the earth earthy, instead of aiming at being like our Lord; we make to ourselves images of clay, and do not even come up to them. You are called to high perfection by the very meaning of your vocation, and if you have a lower theory than many in the world, it would be very sad indeed. If you have a very high theory and your practice does not come quite up to it, that is bad enough, but if your practice has to go down to your theory that is infinitely worse.

3. Our Lord is constantly on the watch for some one of His spouses to come and assist Him in this fight, and what is this combat but the battle we each have with our own self. Self is our greatest and worst enemy. We are constantly seeking its gratification, and as often as we do so we drive God from our hearts in a greater or less degree. As St. Austin says, "There is only room in our small hearts for God *or* self." If self remains there is no room for God; but if self goes, God can come and

dwell there. It was the worship of self that caused the devils to be what they are and that made Hell full of reprobate souls. Our Lord also wishes us to assist Him in the battle He has to gain souls, and this we do by instructing others in their duties. Our Lord says that those who come to His Kingdom must be satisfied with the food, clothing, and sleep He gives them. He is a King though His hands are manacled and His sceptre is a reed. But nevertheless He is the Omnipotent God. The battle is fiercest when temptation is strongest. Our arms then must be prayer, a loving look to our King for strength, who is watching us from His tabernacle, anxious to place the laurels on our brow when the fight is over. The only way to keep our enemy from gaining entrance is to be constantly on the watch for his assaults and skirmishes. Do not then let us disappoint this loving Heart by failing in the battle and not making any advance. We must not be cowardly and turn away like recreant soldiers—deserters, but face our enemy courageously, showing him we trust not in our own strength but in the God who made us and cares for us. We should stick to our resolutions and when tempted say a dogged *No*—"I said I would in Retreat and I will keep to it."

SECOND MEDITATION.

God Incarnate.

1. God took pity on His fallen creatures, so as to give us His only-begotten Son. This only-begotten Son becomes a creature, this Creature heartily

admits His own abjection, He is perfectly submissive, never rebels, never separates Himself in act, will, or judgment from His Father's Will. Here we see a Creature who has no need of punishment, no need of pain, because in Him there is no sin. This Creature served God perfectly, but He has come to do a work. He has to repair the rebellion of man; it is written at the head of the book, "*Behold I come to do Thy will, O my God*"—to repair the rebellion of man's will.

Let us put ourselves into the dispositions of our Lord on entering the world. These are three—self-abasement (view of our sins) gratitude (for vocation), oblation. We will make the oblation consist practically in fidelity. Make an examen in order to test your fidelity on three points: your inner life, your community life, your work. Your inner life consists in the way you make your meditation, whether you go on struggling against sleep and dryness. Your Office; to say it well you need only use industry as to the words and have an intention of fulfilling with joy your duty of praise, you are not to make it a meditation. Your examen, fidelity to it consists in the will and in the fervour of the act of contrition. Your mortifications, whether persevered in generously.

2. If our Lady teaches us self-contempt in this mystery of mysteries, how much more does our Lord; there is no self-contempt so abject as that of the Sacred Heart—the Manhood which found itself united in one Person with the infinite Being of its own Creator—and the Incarnation would have

been an impossibility if the Sacred Humanity had not thus completely despised Itself and known that It was nothing. Self-contempt then *outside sin* will certainly not prevent our Lord from giving us His best graces. Our dear Lady *believed and trusted.* Superiors speak to us and we will not believe.

No word shall be impossible with God. We say, "I made resolutions last year and never kept them." The devil tempts us by two extremes; to presumption, "I *shall* keep my resolutions;" then we are tempted and fall and we say, "I *never shall* keep them"—be prepared to fall often, but make up your mind that each time you will begin again until seventy times seven.

3. Devotion to the Incarnation is a rare and beautiful grace which attracts immense help from our Lord. The mystics tell us that at the time the chosen, we might say the envied Messenger of Heaven, came to our Blessed Lady, she was engaged in prayer and asking that she might be the handmaiden of the Mother of the Messiah. Now we can imitate our dearest Mother in her humility, by being so glad to wait on or serve the spouses of her dear Divine Son.

But the moment she learnt it was the will of her God that her virginity should not suffer, her beautiful *fiat—Be it done to me according to thy word* —fell from her lips and was caught up by the angelic host and filled the heavenly choir, and at that moment a God was made Man and the Sacred Heart began to beat.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The City of David.

St. Luke ii. 1—20.

1. Our Lady and St. Joseph started for Bethlehem, a long, cold, disagreeable journey. Listen to the conversation. Were they cross? did our Lady complain? Oh no, what peace, what happiness there was on that long and weary journey. St. Joseph was happy for he had our Lady and with her was Jesus, who soon was to be given to us. And is it not with Mary we receive all good things? Dear children, why do you not talk more to your Blessed Mother? she *can* and she *will* obtain all you need if you will only ask her. When Mary and Joseph received the stern message of the Emperor they kept silence, so should we when unpleasant orders come.

They arrive at Bethlehem. Look now at the crowd all thinking of themselves; Joseph and Mary were alone in peace, they were seeking God. Look at the Religious entering the recreation-room, each with a different disposition. Perhaps one is cross, some contradiction has arisen, or the school attendance was bad; another feels ill and is occupied with that; but then comes a soul in true religious simplicity, she enters with the wish to make things gayer if she can—full of kindness and consideration for all, she makes recreation a religious exercise, which can only be done when self is

steadily repressed; but in the long run taken in this manner what a help recreation is to sanctification.

2. Joseph and Mary enter the cave, and our hearts fill more and more with reverence as the hour approaches when Jesus is to appear visibly on the earth. Take your place there and see Him born and enveloped in the swaddling-clothes which His babyhood demands. Our Lord's Hands and Feet were swathed in bands to show that the hands and feet of our self-will must be tied down. Contemplate Him lying in the Manger. Bend over the Crib and see Jesus Christ as He first entered the world. Watch His calm, sweet face. Oh, beg the grace to enter into our Lord's first thoughts and to make them your own. St. Ignatius says that when we once begin the contemplations on our Lord's life we are "to see the persons, listen to their words, and consider their actions." A holy old lay-brother of the Society obtained a high gift of prayer by this constant habit, for by doing this faithfully we *live* with the persons, and act and speak with them.

3. It is part of the spirit of a Religious often to draw near to the Crib; nothing will make you more gentle, more submissive to Superiors, than frequently to gaze on the Divine Babe who stripped Himself of all things, to be able to enrich us with His poverty. Each time we refuse to act as children we part with a type of resemblance between us, and Christ Jesus our Lord and our Example.

Spend yourselves for our Lady's love and the honour of her Son; at her voice the great Baptist was sanctified; since that day her power is not

shortened, neither is the will of her Son to grant all good things *through her*. Let it be Mary who works with you, make yourselves humble and docile instruments of our dear and blessed Mother.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

After eight days.

St. Luke ii. 21.

1. Pray for light to overcome the beginnings of temptation which afterwards may grow into passion and destroy all our peace. In this mystery our Lord sets us an example of dependence on others, not looking after ourselves. He is helpless in the hands of others.

St. Joseph is the example of a Superior who is obliged to give pain. Most Religious are Superiors in some form or other, in schools, refuges, and the like, and if we have to give pain we should always be guided by the Spirit of God. This is the hardest part of a Superior's work.

Our Lady is an example of a soul as yet untouched by suffering, she feels most keenly the pain inflicted on her Child. We should deal very gently with those unused to suffering, as with children for instance.

2. How painful, how humiliating was the Circumcision; but it was the law of God. Perhaps St. Joseph reminded our Lady, but of course she remembered it. What excuses for not observing it we should have made: "It was not necessary," but

that did not prevent our Lord from doing His Father's Will; "the humiliation would be an obstacle to His mission later on"—humiliation is no obstacle whatever to the authority of Superiors. Observe our Lady closely, her every look and act. Let us subject ourselves to events regulated by Providence however hard, and guard against judgments of Superiors' actions and motives, however hard the case may be.

3. But our Lady's perfect abandonment to the Will of her Heavenly Father, her utter simple trust in His providence raised her above all this. Calmly does she listen to St. Joseph—"So be it," and instantly her will is bent to his. Let us, without distrust, resign ourselves to the providence of God. Our Lord sheds His Precious Blood for the first time, and thus teaches us to give and not to count the cost. How can we be ungenerous when we see the Precious Blood lifted for us above the head of the priest every day in the Mass. Our Lord in His Circumcision gives us a touching example of submission, humility, and mortification. Submission, by fulfilling a law which was certainly not meant for Him, thereby teaching us respect for our laws and holy Rule. Humility, by allowing Himself to be branded as a sinner, and mortification by undergoing the suffering.

The moment of the Circumcision came. St. Joseph had made the stable neat; our Lady looked into her Infant's eyes and their Hearts communed together. They *would* suffer for the Divine Will and for us.

Now our Lady takes back our Lord. How

tenderly she receives Him again into her arms and lovingly presses her lips to His dear little tearful face. How well they understood each other. And I will suffer nothing for them, I nurse and cherish in my bosom (not merely yield to) their great enemy, pride.

"His name was called Jesus." Dare I then pronounce the name of Jesus, that Name so dear, so consoling in life and in death.

SECOND MEDITATION.

His Example.

St. Luke ii. 41—52.

1. Our Lord found in the Temple. Consider the duty of giving pain when necessary. It may be feared that the next generation will be found wanting in a certain element of sternness, which even if carried to excess by some of the great ones of past times was an immense good. At any rate it saved *their* souls, and the good they did was solid. We must be able to give pain, to refuse with decision or reject even as it may seem best to us. We often find ourselves pining for the presence of Jesus, and perhaps longing for the fervent love we once had; let us be wise enough to ask our Lady to teach us the patience with which during the long three days she sought Him. You can only seek Him by doing His will.

St. Luke ii. 51, 52.

2. Three words suffice. He was obedient, He laboured, He increased in grace. We are to tak-

these three ideas and placing before us the thoughts we have lately been pondering of the love of our Divine Lord, we are to see what is to be done, what sort of resolutions we are to offer Him. Our obedience especially; let us see and acknowledge and embrace the difficulties, and never leave the subject till our offering is a real, efficacious, foreseeing, practical oblation of our will and intellect. Then labour—what is our life without it? If any grow up without a taste for it, who does not see how full of temptations and miseries their after-life must be? And lastly edification—is this a little thing to help the sluggish and tepid by the light of our example to say, "Cannot I do what this one does," to work and help one another, for to what other end do we live in community but that we may mutually comfort and console one another? Oh no, edification is not a little thing, do not think it is.

Can we imagine that the Holy Family would sit together and criticize their neighbours? Did Jesus pass judgment on St. Joseph's ways and orders? What holiness, what recollection, what a spirit of charity reigned at Nazareth.

3. The meditation on the Hidden Life should be a subject especially dear to us, for it is so like our own. If the natural gifts of a Superior are inferior to those of her subjects this renders the community more like the community of Nazareth. When we come into Religion we lose our individuality and are no longer remembered in the world. We are spoken of as "a Sister," but we are then one of a number. The most solid and frequently practised virtues are

the least noticed. Our Lady and the Holy Child lived for eighteen years in Nazareth, and at the end of that time they left the city unobserved and unremarked. Our Lady's life was one of such uniform amiability, unalterable sweetness and untiring charity, that those who knew her took everything as a matter of course and expected nothing else.

A good way to get a great love and admiration for our Lady's life is to follow the method of prayer adopted by Father de la Palma. It is to take each of our Lady's senses and make them the subject of our prayer; for instance, her eyes: compare their use with the use we make of ours; then find out all the faults we commit, make a sincere act of contrition and purpose of amendment, and then proceed to another of her senses. It was only during our Lord's Hidden Life that the Holy Ghost said of Him, He made progress in wisdom and grace. If we strive with all the power we possess to imitate our Divine Lord in His Hidden Life, it will also be said of us that we made progress in grace and wisdom.

THIRD MEDITATION.

By the Jordan.

St. Matt. iii. 14, 15.

1. *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan.*

Consider our Lord's parting with our Lady—she was as pure after the trial as before, her grief was unselfish and stainless. *Fiat*—"*Thy will be done,*" was her prayer, although she knew the separation was lifelong. Though the sharpness of pain does

not get dulled in the school of the Cross, our hearts grow accustomed to it, and bear it lovingly as part of the chalice of our Lord's sufferings.

. . . *Unto John to be baptized by him. But John stayed Him, saying: I ought to be baptized by Thee; and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering, said to him: Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice. Then he suffered Him.*

Obedience overcame St. John the Baptist. Our Lord's humility triumphed over worldly wisdom; sometimes after a humiliation we say, "I could have borne it if it had not been before externs, how can I ever do them good again?" That is a mistake. Humiliations, in whatever shape they come, are always accompanied by special blessings, and God will give extra graces, extra helps to those who bear them well. Some of us see our Sisters receive painful humiliations, and yet are not generous enough to wish to share them. How different from the spirit of the saints. St. Secunda said to the judge when she saw her sister Rufina scourged: "Why dost thou judge my sister to honour and me to dishonour? be pleased to whip us both together, for we both together declare that Christ is God."

2. When St. John the Baptist was preaching in the desert he was listened to by a very large crowd of people, all of whom came with the desire of learning, and doing their best however little it might be. Among them were a few Pharisees and Sadducees, who came because they were attracted by the wonderful life of the Saint. St. John picks these out from among the crowd and gives them

a very sharp and startling humiliation, which the Pharisees and Sadducees must have accepted, for the Gospels do not say they left the crowd. "*Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come?*" How differently we act. If a humiliation or rebuke is given us when we are engaged in any duty, we frequently throw it all up, thinking it is impossible for us to do right under such humiliation. We think we shall lose all authority, whereas if we suffer it in cheerful resignation we are gaining merit for our own souls and are edifying those who witness us. And do not let us ever have "a brood of vipers" within us in the form of passions clamouring to do their own will.

3. Meditate on St. John's distinctive character. He was called to be a "shining light." He prepared the way for our Lord, and while doing so he became the oracle to which all flocked. When his work was completed, God allowed him to sink into obscurity, and so complete was his abandonment that when he was beheaded no single voice was raised in his behalf. So it is with some Religious. They are for some time the object of esteem, love, veneration, and influence, and every Sister in a prominent position must be so regarded, if she is doing her duty well. Then after a time God ceases to use them, and how do they take a return to obscurity? how should they take it? It is while we are in power and dignity that we should remember to employ it in bringing hearts to God, and not abuse it by drawing creatures to ourselves. Woe betide the Religious guilty of this folly. If we desire to

be in a state of perfect peace, it is most quickly obtained by trying to acquire a state of holy indifference, by which we desire nothing contrary to that which God is pleased to give us.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Standard of the King.

Exercises, p. 45.

1. The devil tells his messengers to be careful not to tempt Religious in great things that will shock. First he tries to get them to think exemptions necessary; then comes the habit of them, "they can't be done without; " they tire themselves well, so as to take a quarter of an hour's rest and say nothing about it. " It was necessary "—they will get some charge of importance—a footing in the community which entitles them to exemptions—so esteeming creatures for their own sake. How the devil hates our Lady's heel; she conquered him by humility, and Religious, the children of her Heart, must do the same.

Children of the Heart of Mary, we must beg of her that we may imitate her most pure Heart.

Our Lord's Standard is so gentle, so sweet. He invites us to try to bring back the poor lost soul, to be the light to show the way to the blind: the souls blinded by sin.

2. One way of viewing the two Standards would be to see the devil's flag marked " Pride," and our Lord's banner " Humility." Look at what is written

up under "Pride's" black flag. Blindness to our faults, indocility, hard judgments, obstinacy in our own opinions, coldness and estrangement from Superiors, sadness, idleness, self-ease, weariness of spiritual things. Love of earthly pleasure, impatience about waiting for spiritual fruits.

Then turn to the fair Standard of "Humility," thanksgiving, submission of judgment, meekness, openness of heart, sincerity, acceptance of good counsels, silence, joy in the hidden life, desire of contempt, readiness to forgive — self-effacement, giving preference to others, honouring them—feeling of kindness to everybody, cheerful acceptance of correction, poverty, peace, confidence in times of great difficulties, joy in loss and bad luck, compassion, contented expectation of what is coming.

3. Our Lord's idea of earthly happiness was the beatitudes. *Blessed are the poor in spirit,* a genuine readiness to do the will of God. *Blessed are the meek;* to possess the land means peace, the greatest earthly gift. *Blessed are they that mourn;* over their own sins—ever keeping the garment of shame—and with our Lord over the sins of the world. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice;* those who do not abandon the principles of their Retreat, even when they do not live up to them, are filled with holy shame and wash away their falls with holy tears. *Blessed are the clean of heart,* our Lady's gift, so appreciated by St. Aloysius, when the soul is like a mirror, showing every little speck that even a breath of sin has left there: it is a great grace even to appreciate this virtue.

To say, "I can't help it, sad thoughts will come," is a sign of sloth and that we are not taking pains in the spiritual life. Self-control in governing our imaginations and faculties is the hating of our own souls, spoken of in the Gospel, and is the chief thing to aim at in acquiring this self-hatred, and the way to attain it.

This meditation tests our spirit: we may make resolutions quite in accordance with our frame of mind, with our hobby even, and go on in illusion—but *here* no illusion is possible. The real thing—true conversion—true following my King—true adhesion to His Standard lies in loving and seeking humiliation: *ask* for them, but for grace also to bear them. It is *hard*, but it is solid virtue: all else is counterfeit.

SECOND MEDITATION.

How to resist—how to choose.

St. Matt. iv. 1, 2.

1. And thus we see how by this long fast did the sinless One prepare for temptation. Temptations certainly form a great portion of our spiritual lives, and the first thing to say about them is that they should never be let in—some people are willing to swallow temptations wholesale like a cup of poison, and then they are surprised when the spiritual poison causes them bitter suffering.

And the tempter coming said to Him, If Thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread. Our Lord suffered His triple temptation to

give us an example. In the first temptation the devil tempted Him to do that which would have been perfectly lawful and innocent, seeing the exhausted state that our Lord was in; but He would not listen to the devil, to teach us that we are not to interpret laws and rules according to our own fancy, but to keep constantly and faithfully to whatever obedience dictates.

St. Matt. iv. 5—7.

Our Lord was asked to do that which would bring Him into notice; we also are tempted to look for honour and glory in this world, and our Lord teaches us how we should treat the devil.

St. Matt. iv. 8—11.

When temptations come upon us we should accept them with an unchangeable countenance, with cheerful thanksgiving as the designs of God's providence. Can we say we were never actuated by unworthy motives, love of honour, esteem and praise? The comfort of Religious ought to be that they can feel and say there is nothing they would refuse to do or accept for His love.

The subject of our particular examen will aid us now. Do not keep your examen-book too much in your pocket—if you do, the devil will hang upon it and carefully direct your intention to other things.

After this meditation comes the time for election.

We are very often called upon to make a choice, and should then follow the rules for it, "and take

the means to the end." Never let us make the creature our end. Never deliberate when there is a question of sin (*Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 54—59).

We can never choose between a good thing and a bad one, but only make our choice in matters which are "indifferent" or "good in themselves" —according to the teaching of St. Ignatius. With these thoughts we can easily consider the instruction which St. Ignatius gives us called "The Three Classes"—for here three choices or elections have to be made (*Spiritual Exercises*, p. 48).

Each has light sufficient to see what God wishes her to give, what stands between her perfection and God. It is better to go to the core.

Do not say past resolutions unfaithfully kept discourage you from making new ones, as they have done no good. Even if they were only kept for a month, something was gained, and still more if they were persevered in for six months. The soul does not start now from where she began—she recommences where she left off trying.

2. Resolutions should be practical. Let us take for an instance the craving to be loved, one of the most common faults of nuns. A Sister who has never yet made herself happy and content with the simple charity she receives from all good Religious, is always wishing for something special, something for herself. She knows now she must give this desire up if she would advance.

The nun of the first class says, "Yes, I see I really must renounce myself on this point. Some day I'll think about making a resolution. I'll speak

about it and get it settled"—and at the same time she makes a point of forgetting and putting it off.

The second class goes the ordinary way. She would rather renounce the affection of the thing than the thing itself. She makes her particular examen on any inordinate way of showing or receiving it, and avoids as much as she can all indulgence of it. But she would be supremely miserable if the thing itself were removed. She serves God by meditation and prayer, and observance of holy Rule, and concludes by saying: "If people esteem me I cannot help it. I take it in penance for my sins."

3. The third class gives up all from the root. It is harder to sail by what we must never touch, than out into the open sea at once. Let her trust herself to God who can and does give such wonderful power for the keeping of a resolution, which though apparently above her strength, she makes, trusting in God for its accomplishment. Such a soul will obtain her end more quickly and more surely than one who only makes such resolutions as she feels she has power to keep herself, for God helps those who trust in Him.

In the meditation on the "Three Classes" the passion of cupidity is especially to be considered with its fruits; the devil first tempts us to covet riches, and then worldly honour; the signs of the first are slyness, uneasiness, injustice, dislike to prayer, want of compassion, love of possession—even Religious like to possess little pretty things; love of things for self only, particular friendships, love of luxury, murmuring at hardships. Then

when he tempts us to desire worldly honour, we may yield to boasting, hypocrisy, ambition, artfulness and adulation, contempt, detraction, discord, natural respect, thinking only of natural qualities. St. Ignatius does not say that the men lost their souls—not at all; it is a question of generosity with God, not strict obligation.

The way the third class act, is at a cost and struggle to give the thing up in any case of doubt, and then after to consider whether it is necessary to take it back—we shall generally find it is *not*—to get up the instant the signal is given, and if we feel too ill make an act of contrition, but do not go back to bed—if the Superior gives us an obedience to rest, then do so, but not before—we are always safe to make the sacrifice. The generous soul is the one in which God can work—do not make bargains with God—He gave all, and we agreed to follow Him.

The peace which this generosity brings to the soul is worth the sacrifice—peace hidden under the wood of the Cross is indeed sweet.

THIRD MEDITATION.

With our Lady.

St. John ii. 1—11.

1. Pray hard to our Lady to take out of our hearts that self-love which dislikes correction and has led us to pain Superiors, to prevent them from correcting us, and so hurt ourselves as well as them. Let us have done with judging others' offices, and Superiors, without being called on to do it. Among

the disciples, Nathaniel was very dear to our Lord because he was "without guile," just the reverse of those who are dominated by self. Our Lady *sees* they have no wine. How do we observe custody of eyes? with her perfect modesty she was intelligent and charitable. *They have no wine,*—what a prayer; so simple, like the sisters of Lazarus, *He whom Thou lovest is sick.* When we have learnt self-abasement we become simple in our prayer. The spirit of charity is so necessary in community life. A Sister who is kind on the community side will always be kind in her extern charges. Often the latter is easy enough—but with our Sisters, that is the difficulty. Each one of you has her share in keeping up the spirit of charity; as you are individually, so will be the spirit of the community. Go to recreation ready to be gentle and pleasing. Learn from our Lady to be thoughtful. Suppose some Sisters come home after a day's march in the snow, and find the tea cold from want of care on someone's part—but as for the Sisters who need the tea, do not let them complain, for I can say to each, "My child, God prepared it for you. He knew the tea was cold." Study our Lady, and remember we are the children of her holy and spotless Heart—do we deserve the title?

Although we all see that selfishness is base, and are ashamed to be thought selfish, yet that does not make unselfishness much easier. Some of us, alas, are less ashamed to *be* selfish than to be thought so.

Let us be brave and resolute: we shall obtain the priceless grace to be truly unselfish through Mary's

Heart. Let us recognize how perfect *she* is; so entirely self-forgetful in the sweet and gentle example which she gives us, because she so truly and simply loves Him better than herself. She loves us also for His sake, and will love us more if she sees in us the desire to help others.

In your community life make up your minds that you will have something to suffer from all the rest, so as not to be surprised or ready to blame them.

2. Your work; do you simply use it as a *means* and no more—is it done with care, and *self* put out of it? We ought to be as Abrahams—always ready to cut off the head of little Isaacs—that is, the different ways in which self shows itself. The great work of our vocation is to be representations of our Lord; photographic representations, worthless in themselves as to the material, but valuable inasmuch as they resemble the original which is a masterpiece of splendid colour and execution. We are carving our Lord's likeness not on stone but on a living tree, which by its very action of living is always spoiling our work, and requires great care and attention that it may not be effaced.

Obedience is the consummation of your oblation. Foolish talk may be compared to a pebble thrown into water, which in a calm mind spreads round and round until it upsets a whole community. It shows a want of obedience of the will. We cannot help having contrary judgments sometimes to our Superiors, but we should put them in a pocket and sew it up, and keep them there and never let them out. The great test of our obedience is to see if we

are perfectly obedient to subordinates—with reverence, will, and even judgment. Without obedience virtue cannot be real.

3. Zeal for the Rule will be safe if it is against ourselves. Are we really aiming at humility? Nuns sometimes talk of the third degree of humility, but what is it? does it not mean to choose humiliation and shame in order to be made like our Lord?—so we ought to accept humiliation as part of the thing we desire. *Take a high theory*, by it you will gain more merit, and God more glory; a Religious can do good all day, if only through her *tone*. Always let our aim, our tone, be high. When we make resolutions it should not be "never to commit a fault again," but "never to *deliberate* about doing it"—and again let us seek our Lady's help. All we can do will never equal the Sacred Heart's desire that she may be loved, invoked, trusted, honoured more and more. She is the Queen of Heaven and earth, because she is the Mother of the Son of God. She is the Refuge of Sinners because, beneath the Cross, she had read in the Heart of her crucified Son His longing thirst for one who should plead for them with all the strength of a Mother's love, yet with all the authority of her sinless dignity.

Jesus is the Saviour of sinners; Mary the Mother of sinners; and to us sinners He is still uttering from the tabernacle, the words which He uttered on the Cross and in His commandment: Behold thy Mother; honour thy Mother!

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Jesus the Teacher.

1. Much of our Lord's time on earth was spent in teaching the people, and He often chose to do this under the guise of parables. Let us see what we can glean from some of these.

There was a judge in a certain city, who feared not God or regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city and she came to him saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a long time. But afterwards he said within himself: Although I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming she weary me out.

The unjust judge then granted the request hoping to stop the tongue of that nagging old woman, and thus procure peace for himself. He decided this in a moment of prudence. See the lesson for us: God wishes to be importuned. *Always to pray and not to faint*, what simple words, which tell us always to trust, and never to give up asking for what we want.

2. *There was a certain rich man who had a steward and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said to him: What is this I hear of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer.*

Now our conscience is the house of which we are appointed to take care—it is the house of Jesus Christ of which we are made stewards.

The rich man is Jesus Christ. Oh, how rich He is—with His hands all full of benedictions and graces for us. He has in His Divine Heart all treasures of grace ready and waiting for us, and we are His stewards, and all the goods we possess belong to Him.

St. Luke xvi. 3—8.

3. *And the steward said within himself: What shall I do, for my lord taketh away the stewardship from me? To dig I am not able: to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together everyone of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said: A hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another: And how much dost thou owe? Who said: A hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him: Take thy bill and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward forasmuch as he had done wisely: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*

The wheat signifies temporal things, and the oil spiritual things. Every injury we receive is rather an injury to our Lord than to ourselves. Try to think when you receive an injury, that it is not against you but Him.

Be pained that God is offended, and if you must pass judgment on the offender, judge him as "the minister of the grace of God" to you. Both angels and devils carry our sins to the throne of God. God

calls you and speaks to you by the word of His servant, by sermons, by the confessional.

You know it well. God speaks in other ways, by crosses and humiliations and losses; by pain and long sickness also He calls His children. Do you listen to His Divine Voice?

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Sisters of Bethany.

St. John xi. 1—45.

1. Let us contemplate the two sisters watching by the death-bed of their brother—kept waiting so long—their short message is so full of trust—they knew what was in the Heart they trusted.

How often by the providence of God we are kept waiting—for confession, or at our Superior's door, and we lose patience and commit faults whilst waiting to learn how to be good. How often the poor are kept waiting; let us think of their pale, patient faces; they are so accustomed to be unnoticed, and what humility and patience they practise. The yearnings and desires of the hearts of the poor and afflicted are also the yearnings and desires of the Sacred Heart. The unreality of our lives is a marvel.

Martha and Mary never doubted our Lord's love and power, and what a severe trial He put them to, not going near them for two days. He knew their brother was dying and the grief they were in, yet He did not go. Our Lord does not manifest Himself to

those He is most solicitous about. He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and yet He went not.

Our Lord often allows a soul that He loves to be a whole year without showing Himself, to give her the experience of her own weakness.

2. *Martha therefore said to Jesus: Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died. . . . When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing Him, she fell down at His feet, and saith to Him: Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died.* You see they both use the same words; they have but the same cry: "*Lord, if Thou hadst been here.*" Martha is the model of a busy life, and Mary of a life at the foot of the altar. He loved them both. Do we not cry out in our active life, "*Lord, if Thou hadst been here,*" if Thou hadst been in my work, it would have been right, that was what it wanted, Thy presence. Our life of activity must be dependent on our life with our Lord; we forget that we are the branches, and that we must be in the vine. It matters little if the grapes grow or not, we must be in the vine. The sap of our morning meditation must come from the root, which is the altar, or else the branch will die. We make to ourselves a tangled mass of sensitive feelings which covers us with plenty of foliage perhaps, but then of what good is it if not united to the vine?

3. Consider the words: "*She went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee.*" And Mary rises in haste to go to Him. Are you doing this now? Are you telling Him during the Retreat, "Lord, if Thou hadst been with

me during this last year all would have been right." Will you now stay beside Him?

St. John xi. 38—40.

Then comes the miracle. The four days that Lazarus had been in the grave are a true picture and an emblem of a whole religious life of aridity and coldness. *He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth.* Will you now believe that Jesus Christ is calling you and that all things are possible to Him? Oh, my children, speak to Him, pray to Him; ask and you shall receive and your joy shall be full.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Last Night.

St. John xiii. 2—27.

1. Observe how St. John prefaces this action as if to implore us to attend to it. Our Lord performed this last act in preparation for the great Sacrifice of His life, to give us an example. He says so impressively: *So do you.* The Apostle is not greater than He that sent him. Are we ready to give cordial and lowly service to everyone of our Sisters? Our misfortune is that we always think we ought to be greater, and act as though we thought so. Our Lord never undertook a great work without preparation—we shall never do any good amongst externs unless we have the community spirit. The more we have of that, the more good we shall do, and it is delusion to suppose we shall be good to externs if

we are not good to our Sisters. The precept of charity our Lord gives on this His last night, and the solemnity of this act teaches us what we are to do in community life. Consider our manner with one another. We ought to be able to make one another happy without it being any sacrifice to ourselves. It ought not to be an effort, or cost us anything. If charity reigned in our hearts it would not be.

We ought not to let any one go away from us without our having given her pleasure, and not lay our head on our pillow at night without asking ourselves, whether any one has been made less happy by us. If our Lady were in the community, how would she wish it to be, and what would she do? Let us ask ourselves, is there anything I can do that will make others happy? And let us do it.

St. Luke xxii. 39—46.

2. Virtue is made perfect in infirmity. Our Lord's Passion was in the eyes of the world a complete failure—many a soul dates her thorough conversion to some failure in temporal matters. The fear which seized our Lord was something the Apostles had not seen before—they could not make it out.

His hidden Divinity is the first point to dwell upon. We promised our Lord to follow Him, and now we see Him prostrate, seized with fear and sadness. He truly suffered the pains of Hell, that loss we meditated upon so lately—the anger of God was upon Him; every sin of every creature was

imputed to Him, clinging as it were to His inmost Soul in their corruption. His Sacred Heart was pressed with the weight as in a vice.

3. *The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.* Sometimes when we have by God's grace looked with horror at our own vileness; sometimes when we have heard of terrible sins in others, we have dimly guessed a little of what He felt then.

And there appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven strengthening Him. The Saints have thought that the way in which this blessed Angel strengthened Him, was by bringing before Him the vision of all His elect; of all those who through His Passion should win eternal life—of all the broken hearts He should bind up; of all the love of His Saints, His Virgins, His Martyrs, and of all the great army of Religious who should prefer Him to all others, and thus the deadly sadness of His Heart was arrested, and He went calmly forth, for *His hour was come.*

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Lessons of the Crucifix.

1. I tried to show you in the meditation on Hell how by preferring something to the Creator, the creature finds in that thing itself and its end—emptiness. The result of turning from God is to leave the soul starving, frustrated.

Well we have that picture of our unity with God, in that view of Hell. We can see the same thing

for the more thoughtful in the Passion. What, after all, was the economy of the Passion? What does David the prophet say: *Mercy and truth have met together. Justice and peace have kissed each other.* That is, in the Passion the injury that was done to God and the soul was adequately repaired.

2. Death to self. To die to self is what we came into Religion for. Our Lord knocks at the door of self-love, and asks admittance into our hearts. He is a poor modest beggar, but He says: If I enter, self must go out. This dying to self is a difficult task, and our Lord would teach us humility. The Crucifix will show us what it is: "Naked we must follow the naked Jesus." He is a God who makes no bargains. He has given all for love of us. The soul that loves truth, that abhors all delusion will follow Him.

We must all pass under the Cross; it is by the touchstone of the Cross that the thoughts of our hearts are revealed.

St. John ix. 30—34.

3. When the three nails pierced His Body He thought of those Religious who would make the three vows. It is only after complete failure that souls realize what death to self means.

Our Lord in His last agony on the Cross thought of me. He died with His Head bowed and His Hands stretched out towards me to invite me to His Sacred Heart. We are not born for suffering—praise, reverence, and service are to last, but suffering is only a magnificent creature in the hands

of God to bring us to Him. We feel sometimes that we could bear anything—suffering, labour, mortification, all, when we know we can go to someone who will sympathize with and console us. Why do we not feel in all the dryness and difficulty of our spiritual life, that God's arm is round us? His Sacred Heart is waiting for us, and can never never be wanting to us, if only we will go to Him. Hope to be lasting must be based on abiding sorrow for sin. In proportion to our hope will the reward of it be.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Jesus the Consoler.

1. In the "Kingdom of Christ" suffering was foretold, and it is very real, for us Religious especially. But the reward is no less so, and—suffering passes,—the reward remains. Not a pang shall be unrewarded. Jesus consoles His own. He goes to His Blessed Mother, and in proportion to her deep sorrow so also is her joy. He consoles His Mother first whose oblation had been so perfect; then He appears to the Magdalen and afterwards to Peter, always ready for the contrite. How busy our Lord was. The angels wanted to congratulate Him. He went to so many to console them. The greatest glory our Lord could give to God, and gain for Himself, was from His life of entire unselfishness, He thought only of God His Father, and of us. If our lives could be passed, lived only for God, our community and the poor, then should we have the

greatest reward. Melancholy is the next greatest evil to sin. How can I ever be sad with the remembrance of our Lord's intense love for me. How kind He was to the disciples going to Emmaus; on the very day of His glorification He spent hours with them, giving them a Retreat, sparing no pains to show us the unchangeableness of His love, always ready to do us good, and in His sweet goodness did not leave those two disciples going to Emmaus in their temptation. See how He drew it out of them, and then scolded them in His love. He questioned them only to instruct, and told them what a bad thing sadness was: *What are these discourses that you hold one with another, as you walk and are sad?*

Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem? Yes, dear Lord, we might well think so when we go so little to Thee and brood over self. *Our chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him.* They were deploring that which was to give them and all of us the greatest joy for time and eternity. If we look back we shall see how our greatest crosses have proved to be our greatest blessings, and we shall see this far more in eternity. We thank Him now for many things we once sought to avoid. *But we hoped that it was He who should have redeemed Israel. "We hoped"—do we hope* in Him, who is our Hope, and our exceeding great reward.

2. Let us contemplate St. Thomas; how terrible was his obstinacy, how scandalized the other Apostles and disciples were at his words; can we not see this in their faces? But our Lord is *so*

good--how good He was to him, how gently He drew him on and set him right. *Put in thy finger hither and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My Side; and be not faithless but believing.* Afterwards He administers the stern remonstrance, thinking of *us: Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.* What did St. Thomas answer: *My Lord and my God.* What wonderful words, so full of faith, hope, and love.

3. It is so easy to understand the Heart of Jesus. He is in the tabernacle a true Man with a man's loving heart, loving *me* intensely after having suffered and died for me. He is pained at my coldness and indifference, and more pained by mine than by all others because I have had more graces. When I think of His love it leads me to make the Act of Consecration, and when I think of the pain He feels at our coldness, then the Act of Reparation. We should never miss a Communion by our own fault, because it hurts the Sacred Heart more than anything. He is so *truly Man.*

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Pleading Heart of Jesus.

1. St. Barnabas arriving at Antioch and finding the first Christians so fervent exclaimed: "My heart *overflows* with joy." I may well say the same, seeing the flame of the love of the Sacred Heart burning so brightly in all hearts. But it is not enough to *begin*

well—the sacred fire will die out if not perpetually fed with proper fuel. For this we must *know* the Sacred Heart, understand and sympathize with It, and then take the necessary prudent means to make It known, loved, and continuously served by others.

2. The love of the Heart of Jesus has been made known ever since His Incarnation, but in these latter times it has been more clearly shown to us. And our Lord Himself, as if He could bear no longer this bursting, pent-up love, to be neglected, appeared to a poor little nun—Blessed Margaret Mary, and told her in burning, moving words the pain and anguish of His Heart. A real human Heart—the heart of a Man—a Man-God too, loving us—loving *me* with an ardour, a yearning, a perseverance that He alone can comprehend. This love calls for gratitude, makes us consecrate ourselves to Him.

The neglect, coldness, and insults He receives call for reparation. The vehicle of sustained devotion to the Sacred Heart is the Apostleship. The daily offering alone, if *meant* and carried out, *thought* as well as said, will keep it up. Make it on awaking, try to *live* in it, to clothe yourselves in it, and little by little you will become unselfish, and will please the Heart of Jesus, and will be saints. You may fall, and yield to selfishness and other evils, even after having made the offering earnestly, but little by little it will tell upon you and change you.

3. How many revelations there have been lately of our Lord as our *Mediator*, the Pleading Heart of Jesus.

Jesus now in His glory pleading for us. "They

do not pray enough," our Lord has said lately. It is not the time spent in prayer He means, it is the energy of the prayer. One aspiration of an unselfish soul, who can put her whole being into it, is worth more than long hours of self-complacent dreaming in presence of our Lord. Our Lord is not content with individual devotedness—He wants union of souls in His spirit, in His work. A time is coming when graces and lights will surpass all the world has ever seen of the immolation of self—if devoted souls are equal to the occasion, if the Religious Orders do their duty, a time of magnificent Christianity is near for England, and for the Church in general.

LAST MEDITATION.

Heaven.

1. We do not understand, do not realize the greatness of our vocation. *Come, ye blessed of My Father, for I was hungry and you gave Me to eat,* not corporal food, something higher, spiritual food, food for the mind, and that day by day for years, and this will be said to us. What arithmetician could reckon the rewards of such a life, and God's rewards are magnificent. *I was a stranger and ye took Me in;* and the astonished soul will cry, " Lord, when did we receive Thee, we have never seen Thee before now; it is true Thou dwellest in the Blessed Sacrament, Thou wert our constant Food, Thou livedst in the midst of us, we walked in Thy presence, but we have never seen Thee." Then He will say: *As long*

as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me. What a welcome from those Divine Eyes, what a gracious loving welcome from those Sacred Lips, to those who have been engaged in the divine work of saving souls. *They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.*

2. *You who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* So not being judged, but judging. *He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.* Not as to those in the world will this promise apply to us—our daily life fits us for a *closer* union with Him in the Sacrament of His love. Each solitary step taken in this world's wilderness, is in reality a step towards the moment when we shall be at His Feet, with His Eyes resting full on us. Our vows are not only to fasten us to the Cross with Jesus Christ, they are to be our guiding stars, and shine for all eternity.

3. *And He led them out as far as Bethania: and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into Heaven. And a cloud received Him out of their sight.* Did our Lord reproach any one else beside St. Thomas? yes, immediately before His Ascension He reproves some of His disciples, and that for their "*slowness of heart*" they did not believe and trust Him even yet. Then He turned to bid farewell to His Mother, and she might have put her hand upon His arm and said: "Son, why dost Thou leave me on earth, if Thou art entering into Thy glory?" But no, she did not, and He gave to her

the mission of Mother of Mercy in His Church. She had to spend twelve years yet on earth until the time came for her Assumption, and reward in proportion to her sorrow. Then came the eager angels to carry Him away because He had finished His work; and our end has come too, the Apostles were told to be off and preach, and get ready for the final examen, and it will be a severe examen when He shall come. Our Retreat is ended; now we are to begin again. Beg for light and it will be given. Above all be *real*.

Go over the meditations and see what God has said to us in each one, and let us sum up all in three words—shame, patience, trust.

Section 33.

NOTE.

The Second Section is composed entirely of matter written by Father Dignam's own hand. In some cases, it consists of notes which were found after his death; in others, of notes for Retreats, given by him to various Religious, who were making their Retreats in private. It is for this reason that the notes of a sermon, the last but one which Father Dignam ever preached on earth, are placed in this section. No attempt has been made to add to or alter these notes, which were often *very brief*, and, at times, *a mere indication of a thought*. We repeat, with still greater emphasis than before, that the notes for private Retreats were written for those who were known by the Father to be thoroughly acquainted with the Exercises of St. Ignatius, and who he knew would follow his notes with the book of the Exercises in their hands, as also the Holy Gospels.

The notes found after Father Dignam's death are marked by ✠.

✠ Triduum given by Father Dignam in a College of a Religious Community.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Lord knoweth who are His.

1. "The road these men have traversed we too have to tread," says St. John Berchmans. Let us behold God in Trinity and His Saints anxious to help me; the Father, the Word, His substantial knowledge of Himself, and in Himself of all things; the past, the present, future, all things also which might have been, might be now, or in the future. Knowing amongst all these objects me as I was, and as I might have been, as I am now, as I shall be, and equally as I might be, but never shall be. "*The Lord knoweth who are His.*" There are many, many Religious who have been entirely changed by a well-made triduum. Then let me turn my eyes upon myself. How shall I describe myself save in the words of the *Imitation:* "Wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I conceive or dare express"?

2. Let me stand in humble, trembling reverence before the Eternal Word, thus knowing all things. The fruit I desire is to know how far I practically

believe this to be my true description; the grace so to know it that it may affect every hour of my future life. The saints, who had more light than I have, could humble themselves easily, seeing that of all that was good in them, nothing but the defects could be ascribed to themselves. We, too, will try. Let us consider our principal graces and principal sins. Did we deserve the grace of our vocation? do we appreciate it? do our lives give evidence of that appreciation? What does the past say about selfishness and unkindness to others?

Let me exclaim with wonder at God's patience, and cry to the Heart of God, "Make me know myself," give me the priceless grace to abase myself before these days are over. *He hath respect to the humble.*

CONSIDERATION.

Our Review.

These days of recollection take a very important place in the system of the education of Religious. Man's inconstancy is *quasi* infinite—he can never help losing fervour: but, what he can do is to frequently and earnestly renew it. There is a difference between these days and a Retreat. The meditations, though flowing from the Exercises, are not properly from them; and our ordinary duties are carried on as far as is absolutely necessary. The special duty of this time is our spiritual review. We should look into our spiritual duties in detail; our actions, and the spirit internal and external of

them. As regards confession—is there anything wanting in the earnestness of our purpose? A review also enables us, by seeing sins in succession, to get a good view of the tendency of our passion, and how far *habits* have been formed. As regards our vows, we are to see if the spirit and desire, in which alone lies their perfection, is habitually practised from supernatural motives. Do we love them? Let us dwell on them one by one, and see what are the dispositions of our soul towards them; and then, as to our practice, let us go fully into detail. Then, as regards our Rules, have we the true spirit of dependence upon them? do we despise the world and the opinion of men? are we living only for eternal things?

SECOND MEDITATION.

Self-abasement.

1. Let us place ourselves again in the presence of the Eternal Word, now incarnate on the altar; and begin by repeating, with all the strength of our will, the abasement of ourselves at His Feet.

The Lord knoweth who are His. Look at yourself, ask earnestly light to see. Lord, let me know myself. Study your own dispositions and judgment, its proneness to error—worse still, its depravity, malice, and selfishness, want of natural sympathy with good deeds in which you are not concerned. See your imperfections, meanness, shortcomings. Think of all the efforts your Superiors make to lift you up to fervour, and their sad failure; think of the

dispositions you had in your noviceship, and where you might be now if you had corresponded with those graces.

2. Look at what you ought to possess, and the reality; in place of poverty of spirit, self-seeking and grumbling; instead of mortification, craving for self-indulgence; instead of obedience, independence; instead of charity, unkindness; instead of prayer, neglect and distractions; instead of observance of Rule, tepidity. See what you might do and *may* do. Say to yourself, "I have seen the stars fall, and the pillars of heaven tremble." If God were to let the devil assault me with strong temptations, can I not judge by the way in which I have resisted lesser temptations, what would become of me? Look well into yourself, and see how you stand.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Humiliation.

1. Having striven to recognize the good and the need of self-abasement, let us now see that its measure is our acceptance of humiliation and its means. *I am a worm and no man, the outcast of the people.* Compare this with the words of the *Imitation* which we dwelt on yesterday: "I am a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express."

2. Consider also these words, *He must increase, but I must decrease.* Let us be ready for humiliations from within at the time of prayer and confession,

humiliations from Superiors, and in striving for child-like relations with them. They will come also from our equals and inferiors. The fruit of them is that which might make us all on fire; the grace of touching all hearts.

CONSIDERATION.

Recreation.

The habit of talking of the faults of others is an approximate occasion of mortal sin. The devil is *the accuser of our brethren;* and this habit destroys the peace of our souls for even long periods. It leads to a sort of mutual distrust and timidity; and those who do not suffer from these are not to suppose themselves guiltless; it does not follow. Then there is the bad habit of contention, which is a misery to self and to others, but is not serious if there is a good-will to correct it. The real evil of these habits is that they spoil recreation, and those who are full of ideas and brilliance sit silent and moping. They are tired, no doubt, then so much the more need of recreation; but they do not feel as if they were among friends; cordiality has been frozen to death; and this leads to recreation in private, with its accompanying evils of loss of time and worldliness.

What is the root of this? *Pride.* God will not suffer it to grow even at the least cost to His glory. The spirit of holy charity will destroy all this. *As long as you did it to one of these My brethren, you did it to Me.* A reflection on these words will

animate us to make recreation an exercise of pure and holy fraternal charity.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Confidence in God.

1. Now, let us encourage ourselves to use the means of self-abasement which are at our disposal, by studying the profits of the practice. In this alone is truth; without it any relations with God are formal and fruitless, or all a sham, which we need not wonder makes prayer distasteful. If we succeed without self-abasement, our success itself is a new evil; and if we fail without this, we cannot bear it. Self-abasement keeps us from sin.

2. If our work has been well done, our souls are now prepared for confidence. This is the great work for souls that strive to serve God; it is the tepid only who are not tempted to discouragement. We strive to implant confidence, and soon see a goodly growth—at the first storm it perishes. This grievous failure, so often repeated, teaches us at last that there is no solid ground for the anchor of hope, save self-abasement. If the anchor is fixed in any other ground, it drags under the wind, and the ship drifts out to sea.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Confidence in God (continued).

1. To strengthen our trust in God let us think of the history of the woman of Canaan, recorded by

St. Matthew. Look at the persons. The Apostles, angry and impatient, wanting to drive the poor woman away; they were tormented by her. *She crieth after us.* Our Lord, calm but stern, as He had never before showed Himself; the woman, full of faith and eagerness, rough and miserable; our Lord's apparent severity, because He knew her humility. She humbled and abased herself, and had a boundless trust in God. See the confidence coming from abasement. She gained her cause, *Be it done to thee as thou wilt,* and our Lord's praise, *O woman, great is thy faith.*

2. The world's history is the history of God's longing to be trusted by us. The devil knew it, his first temptation was to distrust God's word. Recognize the effect of the Fall: they distrusted God—they hid themselves.

3. The trial of Abraham was to prove his trust; and Moses, when he would not let many go to battle. This distrust was His disappointment. He thought it was, perhaps, if I may speak so in human fashion, because He was too far away, too invisible, too high. He would take flesh; His people should look into His eyes, hear His voice, behold His compassion, gentleness, bounty, and patience; they might trust Him then. This is my thought; meditate on it as you will. Think of the pain a parent has who cannot win his child's confidence.

Let us not be weary. All things are possible to them that believe. *It is I; fear not. I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel.*

CONSIDERATION.

On the Apostolate of Teaching.

In this important work, we have to remember that we are to seek our own salvation and perfection, and that of our neighbour, to the greater glory of God. This will be certainly attained, if you do your work *with excellence;* and unless we do this, we are not acting as true Religious, and not seeking that greater glory.

We have to educate those entrusted to us in secular matters, as an indirect means to their sanctification; as, otherwise, they would not be confided to our care; but the primary object is not this side of their education. Teaching is an apostolic work; and all share it, from the Superior watching all, and the one to whose share falls the lowest offices connected with it. But the brunt of the work so vitally important for the interests of God's glory, lies on the shoulders of the actual teachers.

Sometimes priests can be found humble and devoted enough to guide the first faltering steps of little children on their way to God, and no one can do it with so firm and authoritative a hand; but much of the labour must be, and is, confided to the hands of young Religious; and, after the training of the Noviceship, they can reasonably be expected to do their work well, the apostolic spirit which their vocation exhales guiding and impelling them throughout.

It is a delicate and difficult task; mature wisdom

cannot be expected from you, and no one is more sharp in forming a true estimate of character than your pupils. You will be read and known, and from that very reading your scholars ought to derive good. The sight will not be lost on them of a young man, without any selfish motive, zealously devoting himself to them, aiding them in their studies, joining them in their walks and games and conversations, breathing through all he says and does the love of God.

Why, surely no more beautiful copy of our Lord's life on earth is to be found than this! Could it by any possibility be fruitless? But how terrible it would be if we did not work by these principles, if we are astonished to hear words of simple piety escape from each other. *Rise, thou that sleepeth, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee.*

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Vows.

1. The vows which accomplish our separation from the world bestow upon us the mark of the elect, —*those whom He has predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.* These are St. Paul's words. It is the Religious alone who undertakes the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, by poverty, chastity, and obedience. The trial on earth of the Religious is, in fact, a different one from either that of men or of the angels. We have mortal bodies, we have the lower passions to overcome; but the

world, which is their development, is absent. The worldling, with the cares of life to distract his attention from those passions, of whose very existence he is generally unconscious, is in the midst of occasions which of themselves tend to develop hourly the principles of evil. Can it be said that there is the same trial? We have a greater responsibility of course; but the extra graces are well worth it. When the great ones of the earth meet, and each puts on whatever can distinguish him from the crowd, how great envy there is of those whose dazzling decorations proclaim their merits and excellence! But what are these to the ornaments that poverty, chastity, and obedience will prove to be when *all* meet before the face of Him in whose likeness will be the only beauty!

2. The practice of our vow of poverty separates us from the world and from its evil influence; it enables us to overcome *the pride of life;* it frees us from slavery to bodily comfort and love of riches. He who refused the call from our Lord's own lips, "Sell all whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me," went away sorrowful, *for he was very rich.*

The vow of chastity is, indeed, most excellent; it is a miracle of God's love, and the greatest mark of His love to call us to it. When we think of the many, many thousands who observe holy chastity, we see a proof of God always dwelling in His Church, and none out of it can dare attempt it. It brings us back almost to the days of Eden,

before the Fall; it is the soul's dominion over the body. Holy chastity is the greatest *test* of our love for our Lord, and it is the part of religious life most winning in the eyes of men.

3. The vow of obedience enhances the merit of every action of our lives, and preserves us in the most comfortable indifference to everything in this world. Adam chose to do his own will and disobey God, and he fell, and was cast out of the Paradise of pleasure. Jesus Christ came. He said, "*Not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me;*" and becoming obedient unto death, God hath exalted Him. Cain rebelled against God, and was cursed upon the earth. Abraham *put forth his hand to sacrifice his son; and, saith the Lord, Because thou hast done this thing, in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice.* Let us value, love, and faithfully keep with exceeding gratitude, our holy vows.

✠ Part of a Triduum given in a College of a Religious Community.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Our Vocation.

1. Our object is to see what is wanting to our perfect correspondence with our vocation, and to apply the remedy. Let us start, then, by recalling the end of that vocation fully to our view. All things whatever tend to God's glory, not even excepting our own faults, and the pain of these themselves; indifferent things, the keeping of God's Commandments, also the Counsels according to which we bind ourselves to His service, in poverty, chastity, obedience, solitude, labour, contemplation, teaching, works of mercy, or the apostolic ministry itself. If an individual, or an institute, undertake some particular work, such as hospitals, prayer, austerity, or preaching, the glory which they give to God must be measured by the work to which they are called; and if they step beyond their institute to do more for God, they are leaving their vocation behind.

2. But in others, and notably in the Society of Jesus, the greater glory of God must be the measure of all that is done; and their members are bound, the moment the glory of God demands something different from them, to leave all else, for the sake of it; and they must work by every sort of means, whether it be prolonged prayer, or any kind of ministries, each most perfect in its kind, with their whole hearts and souls. They are *fixed* as to the end, *free* as to the means. So they give up the highest employment to accept the lowest, quit an occasion of martyrdom to teach a school, leave prayer to hear confessions, abandon a higher grade for a lower, accept with equal zeal the post which deprives them of all spiritual consolation, or which undermines health, as one which is the most favourable to both.

3. We are to consider, not so much, do I realize this in my life? as, do I embrace it in my will? Is this what I wish? what I mean with all my heart to try to be?

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Temporal Wretchedness of Judas.

1. Let us place ourselves at the foot of the tree on which he hanged himself. Judas before his tepidity began was possessed of a high vocation; in this he found great happiness and showed great generosity. What were the beginnings of his fall? There was a passion within him which had never been heartily renounced, and the occasion came which brought this passion into play.

2. God's providence does not prevent our meeting with dangers of which we have been forewarned. *Ennui* is the vengeance that self takes on selfishness, coldness, insincerity, strangerhood with Jesus Christ, want of sympathy with all that interests others, grumbling. *To what purpose is this waste?*

Then comes tepidity—the passion grows—our eyes are blinded.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The same (continued).

1. Let us keep the figure of Judas Iscariot still before us. Tepidity destroys our merits, if not entirely (since we suppose all grace not yet actually lost) yet practically;—think of the unfruitful fig-tree, cursed by our Lord, and which withered away. Alvarez says that the life of the tepid is a mockery of their profession. The right intention is wanting, which is the source of merit, and implies a love for, and joy in, our high vocation.

2. The religious life, thus divested of its interior spirit, presents to the eyes of the tepid man, a hateful network of obligations, which hamper him at every turn,—punctuality, silence, religious modesty, obedience; he is galled at every turn. How can we hope that neglect is sinless, though, in the abstract, the Rules do not bind under pain of sin? Father Lancicius says, with regard to silence, no breach of Rule occurs without sin. Apart from all this, the ingratitude which underlies tepidity

should make us shudder. The direct action of the regular life of others, as says Alvarez, assumes the character of an intolerable reproach; and then follow bitterness and slander.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Tepidity (continued).

1. The thought of tepidity should bring forth fruit in fear—fear of the malice of our venial sins, fear of the poverty of our contrition, fear of the insincerity and dishonesty of our purposes of amendment. We know what theologians tell us about the malice of mortal sin; how there is to be discerned in the heart of him who commits it, a will to pull God out of His eternal throne, and trample Him under foot; a hatred of His justice and His sanctity, and a hideous presumption of His mercy. Well, now, let us realize a little the state of some poor wretch, who after dallying with temptation, yields at last, trembling perhaps and wretched all the while. The gravest and holiest insist that, in that moment of his fall, the malice, hatred, and blasphemous longing to kill Almighty God are there in his heart, read by the angels of Heaven. Surely from this we can learn something of the nature of venial sin, and especially of that cold, deliberate, often-repeated sin, of which tepidity is so horribly prolific.

2. Let us ask ourselves, where is our contrition? where at least is that contrition which, with the feeling of our sins upon us, we could recognize as

adequate, habitual, worthy of us? How few, alas! are those happy souls who find themselves in the daily diligent exercise of holy compunction! Our sins are too easily forgotten in that foolish, empty, frivolous dissipation, which is like a wall of steel before the healing grace of God. Oh, if our hearts were full of compunction, our confessions would be so much more humble and downright, and the recalling of the past would no more be a formula; but when we find so little of all this, we have cause to fear.

3. Lastly, we have other cause to fear—it is good for us. He that fears God shall not be afraid of anything else. It is an accumulated glory, a most accomplished joy. To whom shall we compare him who possesseth it? Do not let us fear truth, because Jansenism has perverted it. What *have* our purposes been? our confession sealed that purpose which was made to avoid the sin—to avoid the occasions. It was forgotten ere we left the chapel, and yet we knew the occasions were waiting for us, *and*, if we asked ourselves the question, we did not really mean to reject them.[1]

[1] The notes for the third day of this Triduum have not been preserved.

Private Retreat of a Religious, 1883.

NOTE.

The following Retreat is mentioned in *Father Dignam's Memoir* (p. 101), and his directions for making it are given, which it may be well to repeat:

"Take care not to pour out too much solicitude on your coming Retreat. When you begin, give yourself so to the point to be thought of at present, as if the whole Retreat were in that. Do not recall what the next meditation is to be till the time comes to prepare it. When preparing one meditation do not let your eyes fall on the next; put your blotting-paper over the page. That is a very important point for avoiding desolation, of which, perhaps, the less the better. If, as should be, it seems you are on the matter of sin on the Tuesday, I should think it more profitable to miss the Communion. I do not approve of four meditations for you, and have only marked three.

"No matter how much you are taken up with the last meditation, go to the next with simplicity when the time comes. Thoughts of past meditations seldom injure the present one. Read the *documenta aurea* of Father Roothaan the last day of the Retreat. Do not do much, but well, and God bless you."

PRELIMINARY—THE EVENING BEFORE.

1. I am going to *be with* God, to *talk with* God; to do so unprepared would evidently be to act rashly.

2. If that is what I am going to do now, before whom is it that I am going to appear? God in His majesty, before whom the whole universe is but as an ant; whose sanctity makes the angels, though so long accustomed to the Divine presence, incapable of sin and radiant with grace, tremble with unabated awe. With what admiration, then! what holy fear! what reverence!

3. And what is *He* doing? He is following, with unfailing attention, every act and movement of my soul. He sees me, what I am in my nothingness, and in my tendency to fall back into nothing; my utter dependence, my heavy, heavy burden of sin and misery; and *I* am going into the very presence of God! Daniel, the pure prophet of His word, trembled and fainted before Him; and it needed the Angel's hand to raise him up,[1] and I am going *not less* into God's presence than was Daniel then. This fear, this deep interior sense of God's majesty, and my own putrid nothingness, I should try to guard through the whole Retreat, as the surest disposition to deserve the plenitude of its fruit.

4. What do I seek? (1) To discover, and to remove every inordinate affection. (2) And *then?* To seek and to find God's Will (see *Imitation*, iii. 2); especially, *lest it rise up in judgment against me.*

[1] Daniel x. 8—10.

FIRST DAY.

1. Man was created.
2. To praise.
3. And to show reverence.

SECOND DAY.

1. *Reliqua ut juvent* (and all the rest). How strong, *reliqua* (*all* the rest of things) for *me!* Do I believe it really? Not one of them made without my interests being taken into account. (1) That I may despise them for God: *preferring* Him to all. (2) That I may revere them for God, as His messengers. (3) That I may use them for God, for this is their end.

2. How use them? as much as necessary, and not more.

3. Indifference, without which to use them rightly is *impossible;* never can my soul seek God truly, while I love or hate creatures for their own sake. How vital then that, *at last,* I should be sincere about this, lest they rise up in judgment (*Imitation,* iii. 2). If I am indifferent, I am sinless. If I am indifferent, I shall serve God without impediment. If I am indifferent, God will have His own way in my heart.

THIRD DAY.

1. The sin of the Angels; prepare the meditation from the Exercises alone, and dwell upon the three

questions in the colloquy. What have I done for Him? What am I doing for Him? What ought I to do for Him?

2. My own sins; the Exercises alone.

3. The repetition and triple colloquy. Hope for great fruit from this meditation. *Beg* and *implore* light, to see how great an evil is disorder, tranquilly endured in a religious soul. How impossible peace is then! How inevitably worse evils follow! Use the prayer: "Dear Jesus, teach me to be generous." Ask, above all, that self-love may blind me no more.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Hell—the picture of shame perverted by self; sorrow perverted by self; horror of preference for creatures comes too late. The lesson is that no one is safe who wilfully does what God would not have her do. It is the saints, the truly humble, those who know themselves, who most prize, most earnestly pray for, holy fear.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Judgment.

1. Then shall all the tribes *of the earth* mourn. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

2. You, who have left all things and followed Me, shall sit upon thrones.

3. He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me, and I will raise him up at the last day.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Kingdom.

This meditation is proposed to a soul that has resolved to make herself indifferent to creatures, has recognized the evil of the inordinate affections within her, and purged herself by much shame and much sorrow to entire aversion from sin. To such a soul, Jesus presents Himself, and says, "Come, and fight along with Me; I will go before you; I will take care of you; I will reward you." And she, from the right idea which she now has of her last end, and of the value of creatures, *sees* that to refuse or hang back is folly, baseness, madness; and, freed by indifference, rushes with alacrity to accept every sacrifice and every pain which can give glory to her King, and reduce to utter subjection His and her enemies.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Repetition of the Kingdom.

Let the composition of place be the oratory of our Lady; in the presence of her and of the Archangel; hear the *Fiat mihi;* adore the Incarnate God in His utter self-humiliation. He *emptied* Himself, and this for you. Then begin the repetition. You

must be content with the food that I use, the dress that I wear, the battle that I fight; and renew the colloquy.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Repetition of the Kingdom.

The composition of place being the cottage at Nazareth, with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph at work: and the immense happiness of their lives, because their only happiness is to do God's Will. They are indifferent, and, therefore, happy. A disordered affection to them would be worse than death.

Renew the colloquy.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

First, read the meditation in the Exercises. It carries us far beyond all that has gone before. Hitherto, we have indeed learnt to bear all things which the service of our King demands, or which may secure our inner life from disorder; but now, when I come to meditate how the things which nature loves (indifferent though they be in themselves) have ever been the means by which the devil has seduced souls from the standard beneath which I stand; and, on the other hand, how the love and esteem of poverty and contempt have ever been "the way," and the only way, by which the saints were formed; that this, and this alone, was the choice, and is the counsel of Jesus; as this dawns upon me, I say, "Be this, then my portion;

this alone will I esteem; this love, that I may be like Him." Here, then, is the love of the Cross, the third degree, which, indeed, to reach for a while earnestly, though we may fall back, is, of itself, a happiness. Ask only.

The love of Jesus makes a man despise himself (*Imitation*, ii. 1).

SIXTH DAY.

1. Three classes of men.

2. The contemplation for obtaining love. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd points.

3. This you will take as the foundation for the Third and Fourth Weeks, just as the End of Man is the foundation for the whole Exercises, and particularly the First Week, and the Kingdom for the Second. You will have learnt what true love is, and how it is returned. Dwell, of course, upon the two points which, as St. Ignatius says, it is proper to notice, and especially the second.

SEVENTH DAY.

The Supper at Simon's House.

St. Mark xiv. 1—10.

1. Read it first. Among the persons is this leper, of whom it is not read that he was cured, to whom that was not given which was given to so many who gave not; but to whom, perhaps, it was given to know that it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive; and who longed for that blessing, and obtained it. He *gives to Jesus* shelter, food,

highest honour; and in return, perhaps, Jesus gives light to know that the foul leprosy which bloats, disfigures, corrupts, and eats away, is itself a gift, and he will not let it go. "The love of Jesus makes a man despise himself."

2. Last Supper.—Teach me to give, and not to count the cost.

3. The Agony in the Garden.—Love makes Him make our sins His. Can it be love which does not make His sorrows, His interests ours?

EIGHTH DAY.

1. Crucifixion.—Our Lady's practice of the third degree.

2. Apparition to our Lady, and notice how after our Lord has ceased to suffer, He still leaves her in her desolation for a long time.

3. Emmaus.—Those who have not learnt the lesson of the Two Standards, nor even of the Kingdom of Christ, no, nor of the End of Creatures, who know not the meaning of love, and yet they do love, and He, dear Lord, fosters the spark, and makes apostles of them.

NINTH DAY.

(*Sunday Morning.*)

MEDITATION.

Love of God for Himself.

O beauty, ever ancient, ever new, too late have I loved Thee (St. Austin).

✣ A Retreat for the Promoters of the Sacred Heart.

The following lines were taken from some notes which are evidently outlines of the meditations given by Father Dignam to the Promoters of the Sacred Heart at St. Helens.

Some of them are very scanty. For instance, on the first day (Sunday), the keynote alone is given. The meditations on that day were clearly devoted entirely to the thought of the fewness of Promoters, and the desire and prayer for more.

Sunday.—"But the labourers are few."

Monday.—"State their privileges," remind them of their "diploma" received in the "church;" of their compact with the "Sacred Heart;" of the "apostolic spirit" which they then put on, and which should drive out all "frivolity." Being but few, they have to think "not what they do," so much as "how" they do it.

Let them ask for themselves "graces" through "St. Joseph," the friend of the Sacred Heart. Their work is to be "eternal," of the "best," "most loving," and therefore "noblest." Those who know it are strong; but it supposes first the "spirit and the desire." Let them think, too, of the merits of it, arising out of their "intention," the "act" itself, and its "circumstances." Of all these the Sacred

Heart will say to them, "Ye did it to Me." It is the cup of cold water, which shall not go without its reward; like the labours of Tobias, who left even his dinner, who gave wholesome admonitions, and was specially rewarded for it all. But it must all be out of an apostolic spirit, as having personal relations with our Lord, and not as seeking self. If they find no light and no comfort in the work, it may be on account of self-complacency. Let there be no complacency, but only thirst for God's glory. Hence labour; out of such thirst alone will truly apostolic labour grow, and overcome the dread of all inconvenience, and make the Promoter be like Tobias, who even left his dinner.

Tuesday.—"A Promoter's dispositions."

Wednesday.—"A Promoter's thoughts." He must be interested in his work; must remember that, if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch. Therefore, he must go in for self-instruction in his work; and learn the "essentials," the "promises," the "spirit;" all about the "three degrees" and their "Indulgences," specially the Communion of Atonement, the Indulgences of the month, the Holy Hour, &c.

Thursday.—"A Promoter's tools." The register —*having let down the net, they drew in a great number of fishes.* "The Handbook," "the certificate," "the Badge," "the card," "the intention sheets," "the leaflets," "rosary leaflets," and, above all, "charity."

Friday.—"A Promoter's work." It is a serious undertaking; let there be preparation, let him pause a moment, and pray; for out of an empty jug comes

nothing; therefore, also let him do some spiritual reading. Then with an apostolic intention, he can go forth and be all things to all men, weep with those that weep, and be all charity and kindness, and yet full of firmness, and empty of all human respect. We can then practise with profit the wonderful art of listening to others; and if they be in sorrow or in anger or in rebellion, or discouraged, let him remember the magic of the calm smile.

Notes for a private Retreat of eight days for a Religious Superior.

N.B.—Each meditation to be read only when the time comes for preparing it. Put a paper over the one which follows.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

1. Let me begin by trying to make myself (which is impossible) as small as I really am in God's sight. Thou knowest not, He says, that thou art miserable and wretched, and poor and blind and naked (Apoc. iii. 17). Each of these words will teach me something, if with good-will I adopt them at His Feet.

2. The fruit will be an immense confidence in His compassion for one so helpless.

3. And an entire abandonment of my Retreat to Him who is my only hope in it.

SECOND MEDITATION.

1. I am created. With what eyes does God look upon me whom He was pleased to create, and create so helpless? If I dare say it, He has a responsi-

bility about me. He owes it to Himself never to forget or abandon, or refuse to listen to one whom He has made so weak—in such hourly need of His care—one with whom He *must* be patient.

2. And then I am created for Himself; not merely to be useful to Him, but to be His friend, child, spouse. For this He made me. This is what He wishes, and wishes so much that when I had lost my birthright He even sent His Son.

3. And this will about me never changes, never *can* change, for it is a necessary consequence of my relationship to Him. No ingratitude of mine, however bad, can ever alter that as long as life lasts. I can pain Him, but I cannot tire Him out of being my Creator.

THIRD MEDITATION.

1. What, then, have I found out are the thoughts of God about me? Necessarily of unchanging benevolence. Kindness without limits, as His riches are limitless. Now, what are, what should be, my thoughts about Him? Truly I am created to praise, to praise Him first for what *He is*—His greatness, beauty, holiness, truth, goodness. Then for what He is *to me*.

2. I have learnt a little about this lately—learnt to fear Him a little less, or, to say more truly, a little *better*—with a more worthy fear. And, therefore, my capacity of praise should be greater; for praise is in the habitual thoughts and dispositions of my heart about Him, the temper in which I begin the

day, go into the church, go about my work, deal with others. Is there sunlight? Does the *Benedicite* come home to me? Do not let the thought go till you have made up your mind that you *will praise God* well hereafter.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Created to Reverence.

1. If the thought of His majesty always came with me into the chapel, I should never leave off making progress in prayer. It is a great mark of an enlightened soul if reverence grows. And it would leave the chapel with me, too, and make of my room a sanctuary, yet without any oppression.

2. Reverence, if it takes possession, seizes upon everything, makes my dealings with everybody and everything sincere and true. Superiors, equals, subjects, children, things material, each claims a study, if I look with horror upon wantonness, in the use even of the least thing, as a dishonour, an irreverence to God.

SECOND MEDITATION.

1. No one can learn how badly they serve God so well as a Superior. The most frivolous, perverse, or idle servant forces her to think, I too have acted thus, and to God! Their faults, if we study them, remind us of the time when we have acted worse to Him.

2. And *we* are so surprised and indignant, He so calm and patient! Again it shows me what a Creator is.

THIRD MEDITATION.

1. To serve Him is to do His known Will, to seek His unknown Will, to desire that His Kingdom may come.

2. How creatures, if only they are recognized as *His* gifts, help me to praise Him; how many a *Magnificat* they force from my heart, if I only remember Him in them! And to revere, if I love, revere, and wish to revere: and to serve, for they are always telling me His Will. Creation, the Church, my Institute, the Sacraments, the Exercises —*all* made for me. When He made the stars He thought of me, when He created St. Ignatius He thought of me, when the Order was founded He thought of me.

3. But is my use of them one of faith? And, still more, my use of the more familiar things,—such as persons around me? Is there *much* gratitude, much praise, much reverence, much service?

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Creatures again.

1. The highest use I can make of them is to despise them all for His sake; to give the preference to Him.

2. To know intimately then their nothingness,

their propensity to corrupt; to see vividly how shocking a dishonour to God it is to love such things for their own sakes.

3. I, who am created *for Him.* The soul is always half a slave. Who is not penetrated with this truth?

SECOND MEDITATION.

Sin.

1. Sin is nothing but the preference of the creature to God, whether it be, as in the devil's case, a preference of some real or imagined perfection of oneself, or of some thing, or some person else. See in this meditation on the Angels, what it is the creature does to degrade, to defile, to enslave, to wound—how it infatuates, how it makes people cruel, malicious, hard-hearted, unjust! All of which is comprised in the disgrace which sin brings upon the soul, and calls on us to be ashamed of.

2. See how St. Ignatius says it comes from *the unwillingness to use the means and precautions left to our liberty;* arising either from ignorance, or presumption.

3. See, when you have meditated upon the shame of Adam and Eve, how he insists that one sin is enough to lose a soul; how much more to lose perfection, and years and years of peace!

THIRD MEDITATION.

On your own Sins.

1. Make the review, in the first point, practically; not trying to exaggerate what was not really very

bad, but full of the sense that God's mercy took such care of you, taught you early, and so well to fear, and prevented the occasions of great sins, and ask for light to see what there has been of pride, and self-seeking, and *ill-treatment of Him:* what there would have been, but for His especial care.

2. Compare that care for you with your care for His interests—how much of Him there has been even in your fidelity; and do not stop till you recognize yourself as a great sinner, and are heartily sorry for all the disappointment He has suffered from you.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

1. On the roots of sin: vanity, concupiscence, pride, habits of deliberate inordinateness or irreverence in the use of creatures—what I call wantonness.

2. These are what blind, weaken, numb, rob God of all joys in us, destroy fervour, stop all progress, weaken the freedom of the will, and take away courage, put Guardian Angels to flight, accumulate pain.

SECOND MEDITATION.

1. Hell! which is nothing but the soul in the *hands of creatures* after death. What it has *not.* What am I? What am I created for? All God's power and wisdom having set to work, to make me able to enjoy Him. Hell is a creature thus made, which *has not* God for ever.

2. What it *has*—that is to say, the creature to which it was attached, now recognized, felt and smelt in its emptiness, corruption, and tyranny.

3. The best fruit from the meditation is, first of all, *gratitude*, and then the clearer knowledge of God as my *only* good; so that it is not only wicked, but absolute folly to seek a good independent of Him.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Kingdom of Christ.

1. What wonder that He should come Himself, after all that He has made me, and called me to! I so weak—the dangers so tremendous—He so deeply interested in the result.

2. And what can I fear now that I hear His voice? How can I hesitate, when it is He who proposes the conditions? Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!

3. Yet, weigh the conditions well. It is My battle, mind, He says; it is My affair. If you are interested it is only because every interest of yours is Mine also. Will you fight *for Me?* If you will,—notice—My food yours, My clothes yours, My labours yours, My pains, My humiliations, My Cross, you shall have a share of all, for My enemies are yours, and My triumph yours. The Kingdom of God is within you, the battle is against self; is it to be a battle fought in alliance with the enemy? Take St. Ignatius' colloquy, "O Eternal Lord," and make it your own, and take, if you like, the

idea of Père Olivaint, that our Lord makes in your presence His offering to bear all, if only you will choose Him.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Incarnation.

1. Ought not this mystery of love of all mysteries of love, teach me to be ashamed of the weariness of self and my own imperfections, which I have so often yielded to and thought so little of yielding to! Oh! how truly He said to me, My clothes yours! He is too magnanimous, too noble to say: See, your clothes are Mine, not thine. He says: I have taken your humanity for you; but, will you not bear the humanity and its weakness, which makes you of the same nature as I? Abyss of personal love, *Ego*, He says, *dilecto meo*—I to My beloved!

2. Is it not, then, much to learn that I can show great love by patiently bearing with myself; great, monstrous want of love by repining, discouragement, peevishness, inconsideration for others? *Ave Maria. Ecce Ancilla.*

SECOND MEDITATION.

Visitation of our Lady to St. Elizabeth.

1. Promptitude about acts of kindness.

2. The blessings God imparts *through those* in whom the Holy Ghost dwells.

3. The manner of our Lady and St. Elizabeth in salutation and mutual intercourse, to be learnt, and to be *taught*, and to be *insisted* on (if a Superior is to do work for God), not as a rule, but as a thing to be loved, longed for, which makes holy and merits great graces.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Hidden Life.

1. That is the rarest of all lives, even among the holy; the life which says to self in secret, I am not your friend, I love you not; you shall not have your way. The whole thing lies in dying, says the *Imitation*, and *this it is* to die.

2. Everything else is but going round and round the flame like the moth; but to go straight, and be consumed, that frightens. Make, O Lord, possible by Thy grace what seems to nature impossible. Thou, who hast made me, have mercy on me. I need it as much as St. Thais did.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Hidden Life (repeated).

1. The Apostleship of Prayer.—For three years His Father called Him to labour, preach, work miracles, and suffer; for all the rest the Divine

Will, even for Him, was that He should save souls by prayer.

2. The hidden life, then, of the Sacred Heart! why cannot I imitate it, if my heart really has in it "Thy Kingdom come"? St. Teresa and her children were and are made saints by this; they were true apostles in a Carmelite Convent. Faith laid bare to them the Apostleship of Prayer, which never ceases in the tabernacle, and taught them the value of every word, every work, every pain in the work of promoting God's glory and saving souls. This again to be learnt *and to be taught.*

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

1. St. Ignatius is teaching you the nature and the ways of the two leaders of men, by imagery, to be studied and dwelt upon. What the devil is like in himself. What the means by which he draws us *as far as he can* from our last end. All is attachment to creatures, and the more innocent looking, the better for his purpose; anything, so that it be loved for its own sake.

2. Jesus says again: "My clothes yours, My food, My chalice; oh, make it yours, you have accepted it as a condition of the battle; but, if you will love Me, you will do more, you will prefer what I have chosen, because I chose it, and love makes you wish to be like to Me." Go back to the first meditation on the Hidden Life.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Three Classes.

Nudus nudum sequi, says the *Imitation*—"naked to follow the naked one," because, "My clothes yours." That means, not the first class, which proposes but resolves not; not the second, which resolves but with a reserve; but the third which, knowing its own weakness, and *willing to use the means and precautions left to its liberty* (see First Meditation on Sin), does what is in its power to make and keep the heart clean; to accustom itself to deny self to self in secret; to prefer the Cross, because "Jesus, my love, is crucified."

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Three Degrees of Humility.

1. Take again the old words of St. Austin: "Pride is love of self, even to contemning God. Humility is love of God, even to contemning myself." Compare it with Thomas à Kempis: "The love of Jesus makes a man despise himself." See how true this is. How is it possible for a creature to despise God, except it be to transfer the honour due to Him to itself? Equally impossible is it to despise yourself, without the honour coming to your Creator.

2. There are degrees of this self-contempt, self-subjection. The first is, which will not think even

of defying God, preferring myself absolutely, will not think of making myself God's enemy by mortal sin. The second is, much greater self-abjection; who am I, that God should speak in vain? *His Law*, therefore, is so deeply respected; such is my humility, that every *law* is what I would not even think about disobeying—venial sin. But this is impossible if I nurse *any* passion, if any inordinate attachment is tolerated, I must be led into such deliberation. I do so prefer myself, so contemn Him, as to, at least, think about offending Him. Therefore, the second degree implies indifference, *no* attachment. It is of obligation.

3. The third is of counsel. It is taught in the Two Standards: His clothes, my clothes; His drink, my drink; His bed, my bed; for He is my God, and I am a poor little worm, whom He has deigned to take up from the earth, and love, and hide in His bosom, and die for. Urias said to David: "The Ark of God, and my Lord, and the servants of my Lord, dwell in tents upon the face of the earth; and shall I go into my house to eat and drink?"

SECOND MEDITATION.

Baptism of our Lord.

St. Matt. iii.

1. Our Lord never undertakes anything without preparation of prayer and self-humiliation.

2. God gives graces for our Mission, for the work He gives us to do.

3. He must increase, but I must decrease.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Christ with His Apostles.

1. He takes those whom His Father gives.
2. He never leaves off forming them.
3. His fruit during His life is small.

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Washing of the Feet of St. Peter.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Passion.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Passion.

LAST MEDITATION.

On the Rewards of Christ.

1. Repetition of the meditation. *Me* He created to reward. What shall He give to this, "the first-born of all His creatures"?

2. How our Lord praised. How He rewarded. How He served. Not a cup of cold water, He promised, should be without reward.

3. Repetition of the Kingdom of Christ. In proportion to your share in the labours, you shall share in the reward.

Another eight days' Retreat for a Religious Superior.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

God's Invitation.

God invites me to make this Retreat; *God*, whose sovereign Will should be the supreme object of my adoration, *invites* me; yes, is really interested in what I shall do; has His special design in it; is looking on it all; will call me to account for it; to *make;* for though He will do all, He still expects me to remove the obstacles. Therefore, to keep the ten Additions faithfully. *This* as if it were the last and only one, as perhaps it is; a preparation for death, or whatever else His providence is going to send. *Retreat*, the very word means *alone with Him;* away with everything else; let there be no reserve.

SECOND MEDITATION.

My Creation.

I am "created to praise" the Lord my God, "and show Him reverence." Created! How intimate then His knowledge of me and my weakness; how necessary His compassion, and patience, and sympathy. How proud and happy I should be in

my relationship with Him; to praise, to magnify Him; to exult in my belonging to Him; to rejoice in my state; to be grateful for all! How I should love my Office, my daily praise; if I wish to praise Him worthily, I must wish and try to praise others in my heart; see how you have failed in this; to revere interiorly and exteriorly the infinite majesty of His omnipresence, and for His sake *all* His creatures; for in all He dwells.

THIRD MEDITATION.

My Service of God.

"And to serve Him," that means to do His Will. This, therefore, or that, or whatever His Will may be. And I have such immense graces, owing to my blessed state in Religion, of *knowing* His Will. How easy, then, to serve Him! how great the responsibility of not doing *His known Will*. This thought makes life in Religion so easy, happy, peaceful, and meritorious. This, moreover, makes perfect simplicity possible, if only this be my great devotion. I have only one thing at a time to think of; I have only to do *that*, and all is right; for God will take care of the rest.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Use of Creatures.

The "rest of creatures" were made to help me to attain my last end. My last end is eternal union

with my Creator ; the means to reach it is to praise, revere, and serve Him. To praise, revere, and serve Him, the things and events of life are sent—given by God ; this is their only purpose in God's eyes, and their only use in mine. My Superiors, my Sisters, my charges, my food, my habit, everything I use, my health, my success or failure, my labour in any office, my likings and dislikings, annoyances, trials, my prayers, sacraments, graces, faults, my character and varying dispositions : do I turn them to His service ?

SECOND MEDITATION.

Repetition.

To use these things to His glory, I must necessarily regard them as *mere means* (valueless in themselves to me, for I am created *only for God*, and nothing but God can feed my soul) ; and, therefore, must conquer all likes and dislikes to them, for their own sakes. One thing must be the same as another to me *till God's Will is known*. It is the blessing of Religion that, with regard to so many things, God's Will is known ; and then I can love or hate as God will teach me. I must never be indifferent about them. But about all other things, I must try to be indifferent till I know God's Will ; for, till then, I know not whether they will help or hinder.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Fall of the Angels.

The Angels, like us, had creatures to use to help them to show reverence and service to God. They fell because they would not use them rightly. They chose so to use them as to revere and serve *themselves;* and you have too often done the same. What shame! what degradation it has brought on them! yet they only sinned once. Ought you not to put yourself in spirit below them? What do you deserve? Try at the foot of the Cross to acknowledge how rightly you too might have been cast away in God's anger, and tell Him your gratitude and your shame.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Fall of Adam and Eve.

The devil—his hatred and envy for their privileged state, and happy destiny; he watches you with exactly the same feelings; he studies Eve to see how to make her love self better than God, and so disobey.

Eve, so richly endowed with many beautiful gifts, begins to persuade herself that they are her own, that she is something, that there is no need of this entire dependence on God. She *deliberates*

whether she will do or not *God's known Will.* She soon falls. All do who deliberate whether they shall do wrong. Again, have you not done so, not once but so often? Dwell upon your shame, and be grateful.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Multitude and Magnitude of your own Sins.

Try to look on yourself as before you were forgiven, as if you had never yet been to confession or been forgiven. Go through the sins of your life, not in detail, but place by place, year by year, patiently and carefully, till you realize a little how many and how much God has had to bear from you in your life. See what vile things they are which you have chosen; instead of Him, your God. See too, what you are, who thus continually offer Him pain and insult. Think how great and noble He is, whom you have treated so. Then let your sorrow be deep, pure, and loving, and try to be loving and earnest.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Hell.

It is the abode of those who *have not helped themselves* by a right use of the creatures God has given them. Refer back to the first meditation yesterday. Therefore, they have not attained their last end. Their life is over and they are empty. God is the only good of the soul, nothing else can fill it; they have chosen something else than God;

they are without God, and so they are empty. They rejected God's *known* Will, so there is malice; and so there must be pain, flames, devils, stench and torment. If they had not had light—like unbaptized infants, they would indeed have lost God, but without pain, for they would not be allowed to know what they had lost. The pain is in proportion to the light they sin against.

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Particular Judgment.

Try to imagine your dead body, hardly cold yet, in the infirmary; the place all in a litter, as they having only the thought of your death, have left it. Now they are asking one another, if you are really dead, trying to detect breathing. Your soul before God.

The Judge—Divine now in His inexorable justice, as He has been Divine in His patient mercy.

The Judgment—the *end* of time, when at last I shall know what *was* its value, what I could have done with a quarter of an hour to gain or to repair; now there is no more time. So rigorous, so minute, so exact the weighing of every motive, thought, word.

The judged one—I—who now kneel here.

The witnesses—*every* creature I have used or ill-used. As life, so its end.

The sentence—as the life, so the end.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Repetition of the Particular Judgment, with the same composition of place carefully. Face to face with God, who *judges* justice. At that moment—

Shall I be glad of my vocation?
Shall I be glad of my vows?
Shall I be glad of my rules?
Shall I be glad of my humiliations?
Shall I be glad of my sufferings?
Shall I be glad of my shame?
Shall I be glad of my contrition?
Shall I be glad of my submission?
Shall I be glad of my detachment?
Shall I be glad of having had my own way?
Shall I wish to have been especially loved?

Shall I wish I had been praised and thought much of; rejoice at having humiliated others? Resolve accordingly, and thank God.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The General Judgment.

Take a little pains to form the picture for yourself; the tribes of *the earth* mourn; the *sign* of the Son of Man in the heavens.

1. Blessed are the poor of spirit; but this means humility,—at least, readiness to bear reproach undeserved.

2. You who have left all things and followed Me.

3. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My

Blood shall have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the Last Day.

4. Those who instruct many unto justice shall shine like stars. Be grateful then, and happy. Tell our Lord that you will so propitiate Him now, that then you may not be afraid of Him.

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Kingdom of Christ.

Read it in the Exercises, and see that it is very important for you. Its fruit is devotedness, for you two-fold. First, for your charge, which cannot be fulfilled without devotedness. Second, for your own self-denial, without which no devotedness is possible. Weigh the terms of His call; not that He will be content with the same food as you, but that you must be content with His. What does it mean—the same? and the reward—when? Only at the end. He cannot do with those who want it *now*. Make your offer real.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Nativity.

Persons, Words, Actions.—Dwell on the willing acceptance of exceptional inconveniences, at an exceptionally inconvenient time. That they do not even dwell upon them, because they see God in

Him, who is made *their charge*. Their great happiness, and why? Talk to our Lord without fear.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Hidden Life.

Again, Persons, Words, Actions.—Think of the interior spirit in which St. Joseph exercised his authority; so necessary to understand because we never govern well, unless we revere those whom we govern. His constant practice of self-humiliation at the thought of what he was. Notice God's interest in very small things, and how they tend to His glory.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Two Standards.

Read it in the Exercises; ask, very humbly and very confidently, for the light to recognize the devil's work in your own heart first, and then in others; the grace to lend a quick and generous ear to all our Lord's suggestions, and to be a true guardian angel to your flock. Beg, too, a fervent devotion to the Guardian Angels of those under your charge, and promise them a thought every day.

1. *Learn to teach them* a sincere contempt for *possessions*, even the least. This will want study.

2. Dread lest the honours of your office make

you think more of yourself gradually and unconsciously; it is sure of its own nature to do so, *unless you help yourself.* What are the means?

3. Power, too, unless you use it like St. Joseph, what can it do but make you proud?

You should study each word of St. Ignatius.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Three Classes.

Pray God to show you your ducats, what you are attached to, what it would *cost* you to give them up.

Test your dispositions sincerely, and try to be thorough.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Three Degrees of Humility.

Read them over first carefully. Then reflect that, as pride is love of self, tending to contempt of God, so humility is love of God, tending to contempt of self. Love, *in action,* is obedience to God's Will.

The first degree, then, of this humility, or love of God tending to your own contempt, is so to submit yourself as not even to deliberate about anything which would offend God grievously; this degree we may hope you have, though none can be without fear on the subject, knowing their own weakness in temptation.

The second degree is the battle of life. It is, as the Saint says, "so to submit yourself as not for

anything in this world to deliberate about offending your Creator, even in a small thing," not an unkind word, nor a small omission of duty. The difficulty in this arises from our likes and dislikes, our preferences and disinclinations; nor can we reach it till we have so mortified them, till we become indifferent to pain and pleasure, praise and contempt. How much you have to do! This degree makes you *sinless*.

The third can only be reached *as a state* by those who have gained the second; but those who desire it can make many an *act* of love of the Cross, and, indeed, it is by doing so that we reach the second degree. Also, by willingly accepting and being *glad* of *past* humiliations, as often as we remember them.

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Vocation of the Apostles.

1. What poor, low, weak, foolish, and uneducated people they were!

2. How constantly, patiently, lovingly, He lived with them, *instructed* them, formed them!

3. What immense glory they obtained for Him; every single act of virtue which they did in all their after-lives, gave Him more merit, more glory.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Martha and Mary.

Read it carefully in the eleventh chapter of St. John. You will see that both sisters say exactly the same words, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here;" and yet He deals so differently with them. One He reproaches, not the other. I want you to learn that He has His own separate way with every soul. What hurts Him in one does not in another, what is wrong in one is not in another. He knows each one: He lovingly follows each one with His providence; He studies the remedies for each. So, too, must you. Again, it shows the *horrible* folly of judging our Sisters, about whom we know nothing of His designs for them, except that He loves them.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Washing of the Disciples' Feet.

Persons, Words, Actions.—Notice the impressive solemnity with which He commences His last example of humility to you. *Wisely* used, this example will make you all-powerful in your charge, and save your own humility. Think of the community also.

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Agony.

His act of contrition, which enriches yours.

SECOND MEDITATION.

The Passion.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Resurrection.

His immense reward for *each thing* done and borne for His Father's sake. Compare His promise with the Kingdom of Christ. Pray for me.

Three days' Retreat for a Superior.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

My End.

"Make known to me, O my God, my end, that I may know what is wanting to me."

1. I am a little living thing; living, yea, immortal; which is endowed with an undying capacity of union with its Creator. For this alone He made me; this alone, then, can I desire.

Can He who formed me have no pity on me? Impossible!

2. I am going to Him. Could I wish for anything else? If it were possible, it could only be a choice between Him and nothing, worms. No one else really loves me.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Creatures.

Creatures.—That everybody and everything around me will help me to Him. He made them on purpose; let me see now—

1. If I see Him in them.

2. If I love them for Him.

3. If, in dealing with them, I seek only one thing: what will please Him.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Gratitude to God.

1. That in all I owe Him gratitude. Because He has "set my feet in the way of peace;" for why did He not leave me in the world, in the world of sin? Happy am I, and how undeservedly!

2. Because my heart is free. It would not be so but by His grace, His gift. Let me keep it so.

3. Because He gives me the grace to offer myself now, in my confidence in His power and Creator's love, that this coming year of my life may be all His. Labour, suffering, temptations, ill-success, blame; whatever He shall please, only that He will love me, and make me love Him.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Forgiven Sin.

1. That my sins are forgiven, although my life is a string of acts of cold selfishness, His patience has followed every step, blotting out the footsteps of my perversity. *O bone Pastor*, abyss calls to abyss!

2. That my sins nevertheless remain to humble

me, to speak of His noble mercy and my badness. Let me try a while to realize to myself what I should be without Him.

3. That my sins urge me to compassion for others. One who has sinned must needs be patient, or is convicted of forgetting what she is. Am I so?

SECOND MEDITATION.

Hell.

1. Hell!—Yes, let me fix my eyes on it. Hell urges me to love my vocation, by which I am freed from temptation to mortal sin.

2. Hell urges me to long for perfect purity of conscience, the uttermost horror of wilful imperfection.

3. Hell urges me to more and more zeal and loving self-sacrifice for my Sisters' spiritual good, that wilful sin may be unknown in the community.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Call of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ's invitation to my soul.—For this I spared thee, for this I chose thee, for this I loved thee and gave thee grace. Come, then, after Me. Labour, suffer with Me, and then be Mine.

1. How few think of Him!

2. Fewer still seek His glory.

3. Fewest of all, those who embrace the Cross, the living death in which self is not spared. When shall I be brave?

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Example of our Lord.

St. John xii. 3.

Our Lord's example to Superiors.—He calleth His own sheep by name; pains to understand them, and make allowance; He leadeth them out; solicitude about the progress they make; He goeth before them. Example: And the sheep follow because they know His voice; security of discipline from the community; confidence in your devotedness. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and hath no care for the sheep. Self-seeking is bad in all, but in a Superior, ruin to self and others. As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for My sheep; impossible, then, not to be devoted to them if I love God.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our Lord's Way of bearing Ingratitude.

1. What He felt when His disciples abandoned Him; why do my children show me so much loyalty? how soon I complain!

2. When the crowd cried, "Crucify Him;" and what do I deserve?

3. When they gave Him gall; how little have I suffered for Him.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Crucifix.

1. You are bought at a great price.
2. He did not spare His only-begotten.
3. Behold, how He loved us.

LAST MEDITATION.

The Vows.

How dear they should be:—1. Because they so perfectly fulfil the object of Christ's sufferings for me, in so weak a creature.

2. Because they make so poor a life so great a glory to God.

3. Because they impart so great a merit to such little acts, and promise so great a reward.

A two days' Retreat for a Religious.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

For what was I Created?

1. I am created to praise Him; *all* are made for this end, but not all receive the blessed helps which He has lavished on me. For me, indeed, it ought to be easy to praise. Each act, whether of my spiritual exercises, or my work for the community, or for the children is a new act of praise, if only gratitude and joy are in my heart; and in very, very great measure this depends on myself.

So let me tell Him that what I most regret is the time spent in dejection. What I most long for is the spirit of joy. Gratitude always helps it.

2. And I am created to show Him reverence. He has given me Himself, in an especial way, the spirit of holy fear; and a great grace it is. It is no merit. He knows how bad I should be without it. But let me understand better, that this holy fear is never so perfect as when combined with an invincible conviction of His love for me and His mercy. It should not lessen confidence, but make it greater; and scruple is the corruption of holy

fear, and so how I should hate it! She who fears God may well trust her own motives, and act simply and freely.

3. Created to serve Him. Again, what a fund of thanksgiving in your vocation! Obedience, without which no service can be of great price; and the work for the children, of which He says: "Amen, I say you have done it to Me."

SECOND MEDITATION.

God's Creatures.

1. His Creatures.—Why is He so good to me? He has so carefully hedged me round by our blessed enclosure, that all that could hurt me is shut out. He has left me three things — the choir, the community, and the children, *besides Himself.*

2. Let me examine each of these, and my relations with them.

(*a*) The Choir.—My punctuality, vigilance, edification, interior recollection, each duty.

(*b*) The Community.—Each one is in very truth a present from God to me—do I believe it?

(*c*) The Children—whose souls He died for.—What will He say to those who help Him to save them? What will they say when they rest in the Heart of the Good Shepherd? Are not they gifts indeed?

Lastly, Himself.—I am with you all days, He says. My delight is to be with you. Think what you would feel if you had to-day to go and live in a worldly home, and then you will thank Him.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Sorrow for Sin.

1. Try to consider yourself like the prodigal, a poor beggar on the rich man's door-step, covered with disgusting, festering ulcers, miserable and poor, blind and naked; and see, too, the Divine smile of compassion and affection with which He regards you, as He comes out to lift you in His arms.

Mind and do not lose your time in trembling about sins which you have not committed. It is God's mercy that it is so—no merit of yours, certainly; but it is true, and you must thank God that it is true. Meantime, to be afraid on that point is only to lose graces; to prevent yourself from having great sorrow for the real sins you have committed, and these are serious enough.

2. The miserable way in which you have wasted your affections (of which our Lord is so jealous) upon creatures. Hence the deplorably natural life you have led for so many years, the unworthy satisfaction in the esteem of others, *made clear to you* by, 1, the jealousy; 2, the sadness; 3, the discouragement; 4, the uncharitableness; 5, the loss of so many Communions. All this—and you may dwell upon each—how dishonourable to our Lord, who wishes to be loved and served for His own sake, by one who shall not seek her reward here. And, alas! you have sought your reward here, and have fallen into great faults when that reward was by His mercy taken from you.

3. How impure, then, your heart has been! how little of generosity have you shown! how you should deplore time spent so unworthily, labour so spoilt by mean motives, sins of unkindness (*which are sins of malice*); how you should long to repair all this by a true service of praise, and joy, and detachment from all but Himself.

Now, do you see why the devil would have you full of scruples, for never can you have great sorrow while your conscience is tormented by imaginary sins?

1. Then, light to know my real sins and how bad they are, how much harm they have done me.

2. Great sorrow for the pain my sins have caused my Lover and Spouse.

3. Joy to think how very much I can do now to repair the past, if only I have *courage* and *patience*.

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Our Lady's Girlhood.

Form an idea for yourself of our Lady with St. Anne, and afterwards, when one of the virgins in the Temple; ask for the grace to imitate her in all your relations with Superiors.

1. With what reverence she listened to them.

2. With what purity she loved them.

3. With what joy she obeyed them.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Our Lady of Nazareth.

Put the Holy Family before you.

Ask to know how to govern, how to see God in your children, how to watch over them and care for them, spiritually and materially, as Mary would for Jesus.

1. How to regard them:—reverence, affection, patience, vigilance, dread of human affection.

2. How to correct them:—guard against anger as a personal feeling, dread of human respect and human fear,—compassion, kindness, severity, firmness, encouragement.

3. How to help them:—prayer for them, especially for the infirm, and the generous prayer for light and grace, care to attract confidence, patience, humility, courage, zeal.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Our Lady at the Cross.

Carefully see her, with her hands clasped, looking up into the dying Eyes. Ask of her to know the value of suffering; the grace to accept it: first with patience; then with resignation; last, with joy.

1. Our Lady's humility made her ready to suffer; pain caused no revolt in her, for she knew she was God's creature and His handmaid,—so are you. It is pride that makes suffering so hard.

2. She loved *us*. She was resigned to suffer what would bring us such priceless blessings; so you, if your heart is full of your community, will always be resigned. It is selfishness which makes true resignation difficult.

3. She loved God, indeed *above all things*, so much so, that in the thought of God all things else became as nothing. She knew that her suffering was God's glory, and hence Mary *was not resigned:* it was not resignation, for she *willed* with all her heart that her Son should be crucified. God's Will was her will. God's glory was her joy; and so she loved suffering.

Let us not be cast down; all things are possible to those who believe. His grace can do all things in you also. It is worth desiring, worth praying for; for those who love suffering cannot sin. Ask for courage.

A Daily Thought for an eight days' Retreat.

FIRST DAY.

God Alone.

From God alone I came. To God alone I go. His one purpose, to save me. His one desire, to help me. Hence His unconquerable patience. Hence my unfailing hope.

SECOND DAY.

God's Providence.

God's providence put me in this world, and in this place, all weak, that I might lean on Him, and never doubt of the forgiveness of One who knows me through and through. His creatures He gave me to help me to reach Him, and to prefer Him to all of them.

THIRD DAY.

My Sins.

The sins of my life, that I may learn at last to sorrow without doubting. The sins of my life, that I may learn to know myself; to see the harm that I have suffered by preferring myself. The happiness which comes from renouncing self.

FOURTH DAY.

Hell.

To see Hell, the place where souls hide from God when they have preferred something else to Him in this life. To see judgment, where He who has loved me to the end will ask only this question: Have you done God's known Will? How easy, you will see, then, it is to do it.

FIFTH DAY.

Jesus Christ.

To hear Jesus Christ saying, "Soul, so well loved, so patiently followed, so faithfully cared for, often raised, cleansed, and fed, I have followed you so long, will you not now follow Me? I have laboured, and suffered, and died for you,—will you not now work, bear, die now, no more for self, but for Me? In what, you know."

SIXTH DAY.

The Crib.

In the Crib, in the Mother's arms, in beggary in Egypt. So very little. Have you ever made yourself little before Him? Try it, and it will do you good.

SEVENTH DAY.

His Love for Souls.

His love for souls and yours. While we are seeking self, we are never seeking souls. To save them, like Him we must die! His Passion and Death, that I may understand suffering! How, when endured for His sake, it brings joy, which I, perhaps, have never experienced, never believed!

EIGHTH DAY.

My Renewal.

Renewal of my conviction of His unfailing patience to bear with me, and to help me. Careful reminder that I must be always prepared for many falls. Precaution against all discouragement, in the thought that He glories in my getting up again. Belief in His love for me.

Three Days' Retreat.

NOTE.

The following meditations were written by Father Dignam's own hand for an eight days' Retreat, to be made by a Nun of the Good Shepherd, who was extremely ill, and whom He held in high esteem.[1] As only a portion of the MS. remains, it has been thought that it would be more useful to others to arrange the meditations in the form of a Triduum.

PREPARATORY MEDITATION.

My Retreat.

Let my whole desire be to enter into my Retreat with the simple knowledge that of myself I can do nothing,—that no one but God can help me, for beings like me are but nothingness and corruption. And do not let me too easily convince myself that I do thus entirely rely upon God. In the matter of Retreat itself I feel it keenly no doubt, but my self-distrust to be real must be universal. *Because thou sayest I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of*

[1] *Memoir of Father Dignam*, p. 322.

nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be made rich; and mayest be clothed in white garments, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. Every word of this grave warning of Jesus Christ to the Bishop of Laodicea is worth your pondering, but without (for the present at least) taking it more in detail; think that it was addressed to one whom all thought holy, and who himself held that he was serving God—poor and miserable and naked and blind he was indeed. Try then to propitiate our Lord by the eager good-will with which you recognize your own poverty, remind Him of His own words in Isaias: *To whom shall I have respect but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* How vain my solitude if Thou art not with me, how vain my meditation if Thou speak not to my heart. Look down on me and have mercy on me, O my God.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Our Creator's love.

Man was created by God, I am God's creature. He with whom I am now alone made me. My soul was nothing, but as with Adam He *breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul,* so too with me. I am by the breath of God—

never to die—never to perish, created for my predestined place in God's Heart, in God's affections. How especial a place in the designs of His inscrutable mercy, the graces I have received clearly testify. O the wonder of a Creator's abiding love! "If we understood it on earth we should die not of fear but of love." What the Curé of Ars said of the priest is true of you. Try once more to think what a Creator's love means to you: First there never was a conceivable moment in God's eternity when He did not think of you, and with real pleasure. There never was or can be a moment of your earthly life when He is not waiting on your smile like the humblest of lovers. No forgetfulness, no perversity, no ingratitude, can tire out that abiding love because you are spirit of His Spirit. He made you weak and full of needs for the gratification of His love. That you might always lean on Him, always turn to Him, depend on Him from hour to hour. If in that weakness which He knows so well, you falter and you fall, shall He not hear your cry? *Can a woman forget her infant, and if she should forget yet will I not forget thee.* He made you for Himself and only for Himself. You are His, and in life and in death and in eternity, He is your all, and all else is nothing. If all the world should die, if the convent should fall down and you were left alone, if you had faith, you would see that you had lost nothing. *Credis hoc?*

SECOND MEDITATION.

A glad service.

For what end did God create me? That I might do His Will. *At the head of the book it is written that I should do Thy will.* This it is to serve Him, to do Him pleasure, for you belong to Him. He is good and beautiful, therefore only a glad service can become you, and this is praise. He is great and all Holy, therefore we must tremble in His awful presence and serve Him with true reverence. Three thoughts then come from the memory of my creatureship, the first: how truly simple life would be if the first question always was, What is God's will? How seldom there would be need of a second, and yet also how full is life of perplexity and doubt because so many questions take their place *beside* this one, alas sometimes *before* it. This is not true service. The second is, that God is only pleased by a glad service; whatever contracts my heart injures Him. I must practise praise if I would give Him a full measure. The third is, that the nobility of my service of God depends upon my *true* reverence for His creatures—no mere manner accords this—it must be in my heart.

THIRD MEDITATION.

All to help me.

The rest of things were created to help me, says St. Ignatius, and he means all—my body, my gifts,

my pains, my joys, my crosses, not only these but my confessors, my Superiors, my Sisters. All made to help me, if I clearly see that each and every one of them is nothing. That as I meditated before, if they all perished in an hour and I still possessed God I should still have all things. It is a truth sublime in its immensity, seen not at all by the world, even by the good, seen far too little by Religious. And by whom should it be recognized if not by me who for God's sake left all things because they were nothing. And yet after this do I believe it? No one can act quite reasonably until they do, and why should we shut our eyes on earth to the truth which alone can make us look upon the world as God sees it, which alone can make me give God His right place in my life. Anything else can only be doing things by halves. The first use of creatures is then to despise them. That is frankly to put them in their true place as nothing, to give to God with my whole heart, that glad magnificent preference which makes it an intolerable impossibility ever to weigh them in the same scales with Him. And until this in truth underlies all my thoughts of Him, my service is not the true service of a creature. Only when I thus despise them as nothing, can I begin rightly to reverence them as His gifts, endowed with the attributes (which can never be their own) and by which they represent Him to me. For this I may love them, reverence them, obey them, sacrifice myself for them, enjoy them; as we say in the Mass, *per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso.*

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

St. Raphael our model.

For after all what does indifference mean? What is it (that first necessity for all pure service of the Master) but a clear recognition of the nothingness of the objects of human passion? Raphael guiding the young Tobias on his way, is the most perfect example of its teaching and its practice, and certainly no one can have a fairer field for his imitation than one employed as you are. How would you counsel those under your charge to give their hearts to God, in spirit and in truth? Would Raphael be Raphael still, without his simplicity? *I seemed indeed to eat, and to drink with you: but I use an invisible meat and drink, which cannot be seen by men.*

SECOND MEDITATION.

A Sinner.

Are you indeed honestly willing to meditate sin as a sinner? It will be hard work for you, I fear, but sin is, not giving God His right place—shoving Him out to put creatures there! Take St. Ignatius on the fall of Lucifer and Adam, and mind and make the colloquies well.

In the examination of conscience if you have

attained even to a little humility of heart, a little compunction, you will ask our Lord very tenderly to show you light for the second, fourth, and fifth points, and try before His Cross to realize how *passion nursed* has power to crucify Him, and how grandly it is in your power to make reparation.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Self-knowledge.

This is the repetition of the two last meditations, and St. Ignatius reckons on it to obtain for us to know the *roots* of sin. Great passions, great sins *always* come from *small beginnings*, if they had been seen and stifled then we should have been saved —and this is the great test of humility, far more true and practical than even great humiliations endured—*whether or not we are honest in fearing small beginnings, and using small means. Those* who are "poor in spirit" *do both*, but judged by this test how few even of Religious are, or seek to be, humble. It is the meditation in which to learn self-knowledge, to begin to dig the foundation.

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

The Face of our Judge.

The first meeting between the soul and our Lord at the judgment-seat. We are told how in criminal courts the one to be judged eagerly scans the face

of the judge, in the hope of reading there signs of compassion.

The soul's first impulse will be to look upon the Face of our Lord, and then to fall down and cry for mercy. But our Lord will answer: "This is not the time for mercy, I was with you in the Blessed Sacrament ever ready to receive you—no matter how many falls, I was willing to pardon—however great your sin, I was always ready to forgive. The time of mercy is now past; My work is to judge."

And the judgment will be cold, calm, strict judgment on each thought, each action, each word, each desire, each intention. The veil with which we shroud our conscience *now* will then be drawn aside. We shall see each single sin in the light of God's truth. He on His throne, and my soul standing before Him, seeing clearly and answering truthfully. Angels will be there, devils will be there —the places where I have sinned will appear, each bearing witness of evil or of good; and all will pass under God's eye, and under my eye. One of your greatest consolations in that moment will be the remembrance of well-made acts of contrition. You make them daily now; each time you make one, pull yourself up, make it with your whole heart, and a wave of the Precious Blood will flow over your soul blotting out your sin. Let each act of contrition be a standpoint—of sorrow for the past and a fresh beginning for the future. Let us also bear in mind how each single thing we then shall have to answer for, is now within our own control.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Kingdom of Christ.

See Him bringing all His clothes, all His tools, all the things *He used* in life, and sitting down by your sick-bed telling you how He wants you to accept them, and make them your own, for He wants you to be like Him, for He loves you. He says, "Not My will but Thine, O My Father." He subjects Himself for you, that you might free yourself of your strong will, for Him. He says: "Behold in the full presence of all thy prevarications and ingratitude, I embrace for thee all humiliation, all suffering, all bitterness, if thou wilt only deign to accept them from Me for the good of thy soul. If only thou wilt let Me draw thee by them to Me." Shall the servant be greater than the Master? Shall the Master live in poverty, in contempt, in oblivion, whilst the servant lives in honour, and praise, and loved by the world and sought after? Shall the Master's Head be crowned with thorns while the servant's head is crowned with roses? Shall the Master's Heart be wrung with the agony of seeing His Apostles abandon Him—Judas betraying Him, and Peter denying Him, and the servant expect opposite treatment? Rabboni! do with *me what Thou wilt!*

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Three Degrees of Humility.

1. St. Augustine says, "Pride is love of myself even to contempt of God, humility is love of God even to contempt of self." No motive is possible for despising God except to take the honour due to Him to myself—and there is no sincere self-contempt which does not of its own nature tend to honour, love, and obey God: but it has degrees. First the habitual attitude of soul which does not dream of renouncing God for anything.

2. The second, the far more perfect subjection to God, which does not admit the thought which entails breaking *any* law of God, *i.e.*, your Rules, which come from Him. The will of your Master is absolutely sacred in your eyes. But because my natural likes and dislikes ever solicit me to this I must make myself indifferent.

3. The third is the only *true* love which so despises self as to have no other thought or purpose but to be in all things like to Him. It entails the first and second. But even while far from this habitual preference of the Cross we may make real acts, especially of *gladness* for past shame suffered. In other words, the second is the battle of life. The imitation of Christ the way to the third.

Let me think again why He made me to be His very bride. For this He gave me free-will—for a bride must love, must choose, and must choose only

one. For this then He set me *here* and *free* amongst many, that I might choose. It is true it is choice between all and nothing; but the all is hidden, and the nothings are *very*, *very* near. Like a mother who all but hides herself amongst a group of beautifully dressed women to see if her child will recognize her, He now with loving, longing eyes awaits my glance. If then I am sincere when I say I know He loves me, I cannot doubt His interest in the choice I make, His pain when it is postponed.

LAST MEDITATION.

The Blessed Sacrament.

1st Point. The time He instituted It. His way! when He was most hurt, *He gave.*

2nd Point. The sort of gift. The one which would put Him most at our mercy—He abandoned Himself into our hands.

3rd Point. Why? He says, *He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me*—what He would have to suffer was nothing in His eyes so long as it gave us life!

✠ Notes of a Sermon preached on 5th November, 1893, in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Wimbledon.

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.—WHO THEY ARE.

In first speaking to you on a great subject like this, it becomes a matter of great importance to convince you all how deeply you are interested in it, how closely it applies to yourselves. It is impossible, indeed, to forget that only a few days ago, you yourselves saw with your own eyes, how quickly the transit is made from this land of the super-abounding mercy of God, to the realm of inexorable justice.[1] This appeal to the mercy of God would seem to have become so habitual, that when, in the next world, we fall at our Lord's Feet, and with gratitude recognize the ray of sanctifying grace which delivers us from eternal despair, we at the same time behold how thickly the defilement of years, and perhaps of unexpiated sin, and tepid life, has encrusted our souls, and we hear the terrible sentence of long years, it may be, of exile from God, the familiar words naturally escape from us: "Have mercy, O God, according to Thy great

[1] Father Morris, S.J., beloved and revered, had died while in the pulpit of Wimbledon, on 22nd October, 1893.

mercy;" we have to listen to the reminding words of the Judge, mercy is no more. "As the tree falls so shall it lie." Once, indeed, there was a time of mercy, a time of voluntary penance and expiation, when every breath of prayer was made fruitful by grace, our every almsdeed delivered from sin. But that time is passed away for ever; and under the all-seeing eye of the Eternal Justice, what remains to be expiated must be expiated by pain to the last farthing, to the satisfaction of the Divine sanctity, since nothing defiled can enter Heaven. It remains for us to inquire what it is which the Church teaches about the souls in Purgatory.[1]

[1] Father Dignam preached on 12th November, 1893, at Wimbledon, on Purgatory, but the notes of this sermon cannot be found.

Section 333.

LETTERS AND NOTES OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.

To a Superior of a large Order, with several Houses, and recently appointed to her Office.

A LITTLE roughing here and there might not have been bad for you; and for others, an immense grace. You have been good and simple so far, thank God, and never wanted to be anybody; but all that does not tell me what you may be after you have had a little incense! I never forget a memento of you, for you carry so many on your shoulders now; it is a short way of doing much!

I wonder if you tell the truth about looking impatient on being interrupted, and often speaking impatiently. I do not expect you to exaggerate; and if it is true, you are a very bad child indeed. You have not been at all true to our Lord.

. . . . . .

So glad your soul is getting into shape. It had a great deal to go through, and a good deal to do while still, like that of a *young* crab, the shell was soft; so glad to see you in earnest about profiting by interruptions. St. Frances of Rome, who is an exquisite model for you, will help you, especially in this, if you will say some *Aves* in her honour. It is an immense step to solid virtue; and, if you really make it interiorly, supernatural and brave, "He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High shall say, My God, in Him will I trust."

Oh! if you knew what a selfish consolation it is to hear of other folk praying; not to spoil the work God wants of them!

Be brave, for patience is admirably exercised in prayer; you must have immediate results, or else you grumble. All that you have done for God's glory is quite right; why should you, like another Ozias, say, "We will wait and see for five days, and then give up"? (Judith vii. viii.)

. . . . . .

You should be sorry for any wilful gossip for pleasure's sake, or conscious human respect, when it is a call from God to deliver yourself up for the good of the family of our Lady. Thoroughness is the surest way to God's blessing, and successful issue. You had better grow familiar with the Church's prayers at the end of *Tenebræ*. I do not think our Lord wants immolation, and we must be prepared to find Him work out the designs of His Love in ways inscrutable. *Shall not my soul be subject to God?* Be *you* true, and brave, mind, means be cheerful, calm, strong, and at peace; and all this within you, and by yourself with Him, no less than with your children; and no failure must be allowed there. Go on loving your Crucifix; it will talk to you presently, as never book did, you will see. Oh, no; do not make any more positive offerings than the very positive one of your daily life. Our Lord quite understands that, and will take as much as ever He wants, without asking your leave. Have great, great trust and great gratitude; when we *see* all that we have to be grateful for, it will be too late. We are all so inclined to say, "Have mercy on *me*, help *me*," rather than, "Thy kingdom come." Our Lord *wants you near*. Speak to Him of any worries and bothers—St. Gertrude did this; also, if any infidelity has caused a cloud. Peace is impossible, without self-abjection gladly accepted. If you will but keep your heart lifted and believe in the Everlasting Love, strength

will be there. If the Angels could feel envy, they would about two acts in our life. 1. Our *vows* to belong only to God. 2. Our act of dying for God.

. . . . . .

Our Lord is not only putting you on the Cross, but to be ground in a mortar, you must be immeasurably strong in the conviction that His grace will be sufficient for you, even if He judge it expedient that *one woman* should "die for the people." Have the greatest confidence that our Lord will be with you in every step of your thorny way.

Your thoughts about your children are excellent: to aim at making each one feel I am interested, satisfying without long talks, devotion to their Angel Guardians,—you scarcely could find more valuable "industries" than those to help you to become a perfect mother.

. . . . . .

"Make my mind work," you say. *I* would be very contented to rest at His feet, waiting for Him, if only I have His memory in my heart, His name upon my lips, and the entire contented sense that I deserve no notice, and ought to be surprised as well as happy if I get it. I am glad that you have tried "often and often" to get rid of the cross, because that is enough to make God's will clear to us, and to make us reconciled to His will.

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Now, look here: to repine at being still Superior would be not only too bad, but even shortsighted. It is the best place of all for gaining merit and giving God glory. You will have a much better place in Heaven for it, mind and believe that. You will not "*lose* the work of a lifetime," but USE it—mind and do so. At the same time I quite believe what you say, that you have given way to irritation, and chafed under your cross. That is naughty, of course, and must stop, not by being weak or timid, but exactly by

being thorough, that is, by looking your cross straight in the face, accepting it gaily from God, and turning it to good account.

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To say your *Pater* and *Ave* for the soul that exercises you, is but a namby-pamby half-and-half sort of thing, not worthy of you. It is your work rather to see, and see deeply, that this is all made by God's love on purpose for you, to lift you from cowardice to courage, from nature to grace, to form you to do more yet for our Lord's good service. Here you are puking, and muling, and sighing for rest, when you ought to be girding yourself for real work, as if all you had done was but a mere preparatory drill. So your P. E. must be to make *real interior acts* of faith that it is God's gift, gratitude for the *HELP*, resolution to use it for His glory. And this should come from your heart heartily every time you meet an annoyance, or a cross, "one, two, three, from Thee, O Lord. Thanks, I will." So as to regard with fearless faith each trial as a grace, trusting to Him through all. This will bring brightness, and some little of the constraint in your manner will go under its influence, and with profit. *See* it, my dear child, and let there be a *sursum corda* for each new trial.

. . . . . .

Pray that the holy fear, which seems now so inseparable from your great charge, may never grow less. In truth, responsibility is truly dreadful *only to those who do not dread it;* but it is a great and rare grace to preserve, after familiarity has grown upon the soul, that holy spirit of fear and reverence, which alone can make government like God's. Most perfectly do I understand, when you say, about the disposal to be made of Sisters, "I feel as if a saint were wanted;" but, then, you must not forget that the saints would feel it more than you; that is to say, that, when

human prudence has done its best, only God can bring it to a good issue; the most important part, therefore, of your work in such matters is, that *when* you have decided and acted, you put the whole issue into His hands, without any confidence in your own counsel; but with entire, trustful abandonment to Him, and His blessing on your act.

To my mind, the master-thought for you should be, both in regard to novices and all the houses too,—to inspire, not so much religious discipline, as the *love* of it. To convince them that where, and only where, community thought is *high*, discipline esteemed, the Rules *loved* as the direct manifestation of God's Will and not only kept, but guarded too, there our Lord will be consoled, and will delight to dwell, and to pour out His intimate favours on individual souls. And that, therefore, the hunger for relaxations and exemptions, and the fashion of evading the Rule, is a community bane, which poisons not the soul alone, which is subject to it, but the whole house along with her. True love of our Lord, and true zeal for His interests, must make every Sister long for the praise which the dear old seventh chapter of Wisdom speaks of,—being "commended for the gift of discipline." A spirit of this kind works more good, both for Superiors and subjects, as well as for those they labour for, than anything narrower can do, provided only it be interior and sincere; but aim at this, judge by this, that a community is not a community when there is individual self-seeking of a number of individuals; but only when there is community abnegation of individual self, to procure community service of our Lord's interests. A Religious who weeps over a wilful breach of Rule, because it is a robbery of the Sacred Heart, loves our Lord better than angels could tell; and when you have that spirit in your community, there will be joy in Heaven. Such is the best advice that I can give you. . . .

I suggest some of the dangers attending government by letter. Much suffering is caused by a succession of cold letters. Overwork, often, is the only cause of the tone, and sometimes God permits good to come of it, but our part is to guard against it. Two of our best and holiest Superiors have both told me that the hardest thing is to remember *never to omit* the encouraging word when angry. If there be the slightest doubt that a letter be too severe, never let it go, keep it till to-morrow. *Love justice*, *hate iniquity*, in high and low. Never write as if you believed an accusation, until it is proved. *One* witness is not proof. It is seldom good to keep people in disgrace; but when the fault is public, let the humiliation be public too, and then have done with it. Do not think it lost, if the person is not the better, the community is sure to be.

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Our Lady will take your place rather than let you act unwisely. Nineteen years of superiority means nineteen years of extra graces from God. Do not be so rash as to wish for anything, except that God's Will may be perfectly accomplished in you. Trust unfailingly, and do so brightly. You crave for sweetmeats, and yet God is feeding you lovingly with solid food. In Heaven you can put God to rights as to *when* He gives His caresses. Fie! be glad and grateful, for He knows best, and loves you well. His greatest favours are reserved for those to whom He gives the heaviest burdens; the very fact of these having greater responsibilities is the sure security for greater graces, and it is sure that you will be a better nun from having been Superior, but *not if you rebel;* for dislike, which is selfish, is sure to end in a liking which is equally selfish, and *that is ruin;* while a supernatural gratitude will always preserve you from a sordid joy. The first two verses of the *Magnificat* should be said with your whole heart.

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While travelling, Blessed Peter Faber (St. Ignatius' eldest son, and one of the very sweetest examples of the Society) used to pay all his devotion to the Angel Guardians of those he was sent to help. I cannot perhaps recommend anything more useful than this, especially if you enter into it in the free, confiding way he prayed to them; the Angels of the novices, lay-sisters, choir-sisters, officials, and Superiors, for each need you know of; that the Council you are going to form part of may be animated by the Holy Ghost Himself, and that the spirit of wisdom and piety may go forth from it through the whole Congregation, and touch every heart with a new spirit of fidelity to the Institute.

Make interior acts of salutation to the Angel Guardians you meet on entering the choir and refectory, and at the meeting of the Consulters. This will tend to impress the supernatural upon all your thoughts and feelings during your stay; and it is *that*, above all, which will render your help valuable and your presence a means of grace and light to others.

St. Ignatius wants us to learn to despise ourselves, not only because of our sins, but merely by seeing how self is always interfering with and spoiling pure generous love of Jesus Christ. This, too, is what the *Imitation* means in Book II. by "the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself, a lover of Jesus and *of truth;*" but you need a *great deal* of light, before you can see what a great mine of *lasting* prayer there is in this truth, the fruit of which is a tranquil, hearty self-contempt, which has nothing whatever to do with fear or discouragement, or even the actual amendment of your ways. Our cry should be, *Lord, show me*, not because I am offending Thee, but because to know myself is to love Thee: *For the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself.*

A Nun's Way to True Happiness.

You may well ask how to make the younger professed strong. The great misery is that until their little fingers are all burnt off, they cannot believe, they cannot see. They are not humble enough to ask *truly* and *earnestly* for the light God is so ready to give them. It requires immense light to convince a young nun, how easily self-love may blind her, and how miserable she is till she has really made up her mind to go against self when it smarts.

Nuns, who so easily might be full of peace and praise all day, and all the year through, lead sad, dejected lives, only because they have not the courage to accept the light, and be thorough; they are not candid, simple, or straightforward, and this is the whole reason why. Convince them of this ruthlessly, that God loves them too well to let them be happy while they seek themselves, and that unless they are humble enough to cry out to Him for light, they will seek themselves all day long without knowing it. Ask them, for the Sacred Heart's sake, to say, "Do what you like with me, dear Lord—only make me true."

Advice to another Superior.—On Chapter.

You must not think that fervour or perfection of observance is, in any way, mixed up with the point of weekly or fortnightly Chapter. Not a bit of it; and it is a mischievous mistake to think so.

What is vital is that, when Chapter comes, it should be *real*, and efficacious, and solemn, free from all the matter-of-course feeling which routine tends to produce. After that comes the comparatively unimportant point, how often? Of course, anybody can see that it *might be too often;* otherwise, the perfect thing would be Chapter every

day or oftener. To get, then, the maximum good, you have to avoid the excessive frequency which always at last takes away the feeling of solemnity, however well conducted, and too great rarity on the other hand. In this view, I should myself regard once a fortnight as preferable to once a week; but I should not regard it as in any way a question of principle. And of those who thought that, by having Chapter only once a fortnight, they were being deprived of the "life and support of religious existence," I should merely make a memorandum to save myself the trouble of consulting them any more. They are very silly women who confuse essentials and accidentals in this way, and you ought not to be taken in by pious twaddle of this kind. It is by punctuality and reality, not by frequency, at least not by great frequency, that Chapter *promotes* the "life and support," &c., though it never *is* either the one or the other. No exaggerations are more dangerous than pious ones. And one who talks in that way neither thinks nor weighs her words. Nor should I be sure that the way in which God blesses what you do is any encouragement to go further; on such a principle you could push everything too far.

But, on the question itself of week or fortnight, I have no conviction, one way or the other. Either will mainly depend on the way it is done, and it will certainly be much harder to do *well often.*

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Of course, I said my Mass on the 25th for J. I asked mighty gifts for her, good sense, humiliations, immense courage. I hope for little E. that one lesson in wildgoose hunting is enough, and I hope she will settle down. Tell her to keep all the quicksilver in a bottle, and *tightly corked;* then it will be very useful, and will help her to say her prayers well, and, as long as she does that, she will be

happy. I don't like the correspondence with L.; it is all gossip, and "what shall it profit" our souls to have that going on?

To another Superior.—On St. Teresa.

Your prayer for help to get back St. Teresa's sense of "burden" at the ease and comfort of the life at the Incarnation Convents is just one of those things which *pass the limits*. You must think, in the first place, that it might not be good for you. To her it was part of a new and very extraordinary call, and she had gone through the whole operation of becoming a Saint before God sent it to her. Remember that all those things which became burdensome to her when God had breathed into her a new vocation, *had been* helps to her, as she herself keenly realized. And they should be helps to you, for it is for that God has given them. An honest attempt to realize St. John Berchmans' motto may need, indeed, a little careful study to see how and where perfect community life exacts mortification; but I believe fruit will come from it, if you try.

To a Novice Mistress.

As to the novices, I greatly doubt the plan of harping upon one virtue—at least, it needs, I feel, a good deal of capacity. The Noviceship lectures should surely be on the Rule, and embrace all; it should be a sort of catechism of the religious life, illustrated from your own community spirit, and practice *of the most elementary kind*. One soul needs confidence, another obedience, another charity; but all need drill in the meaning of the Rules and Constitutions, and in all of them. Where else will your method—without which no noviceship is really education—come from? I

am *persuaded* that novices learn best from being allowed to grow in peace in rules, customs, and practices, with our eyes on them.

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My advice is to concentrate yourself on perfection in purring. A comfortable, old, well-to-do cat is about the type of what, in my judgment, will make you a model in your office. So vigilant, yet so *interiorly* quiet, over it, so rarely letting her voice be heard, yet so unmistakably pleased with her neighbour, so truly dignified, so far from levity, and yet so companionable. You remember the man asked to give a definition of a perfect Superior? "Well, sir, see everything, sir, say as little as ever you can, sir, and as for doing, sir, just do nothing at all, at all, sir, and then you'll be right, sir."

You must not make a mistake about what you call your novices' want of faith and love; all that is common in young souls, especially if they are ambitious of going faster than God wants them. It is only a half-petulant way of saying they are cross, for want of sensible consolation; though, of course, they don't know it themselves, and would indignantly reject such an imputation. Ignore what they say about want of faith, and teach them to ignore it, though, they never like such advice at first. When they say they have not got the love of our Lord, they mean, though He has given them enough to keep them from sin, He has been ungrateful enough to deprive them of the pleasant sense of it. You ask them, perhaps, "Well, do you think you deserve it?" and it is quite a new light to them. Ask them again, "May it not be that our Lord sees it would not be good for you?" and more light comes. Very reserved people have generally very little in them to tell; as the soul grows, they will not be reserved. As for all the rest, be kind, and *take things easy*. It needs infinite patience

and kindness before any severity can do good. If your whole heart is in your office, all else will come in good time.

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I am very glad to see you happily looking forward to a time when you can teach at leisure both yourself and your novices, *to let God be really the occupation of your heart;* only this, you must remember, can but be the outcome of solid virtue. I mean that which is practised as a habit, and, therefore, *constantly*, *easily*, and well. It is wonderful what can be done in that way, while the young soul can be taught to think little of itself, or rather, as you say, to think not of itself, but all of God. Teach it that it is a poor little thing, which knows nothing, that God is everything, and that nothing else matters. Humble those who have these miserable little temptations of jealousy about one another; show them how ashamed they should be of such temptations, whilst God, in all His greatness, is lavishing His goodness on them, and they can forget Him to fret about such paltry littleness as this. Let them suffer *from seeing your compassion.*

To a Novice.

She had written to him that she had somewhere seen it said, "Unless a Religious became a vessel of gold in his Noviceship, he would never become one." And also that, "A Religious is in after-years what he has made himself in his Noviceship."

The Father replied:

If this is an axiom, it is one of a school which I do not admire, and I regard it as neither solid nor wholesome. As for "vessels of gold," they do not exist; and one who made his Noviceship under the best of all masters said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." To have taken in the

milk of Religion in an humble and docile spirit, one which sincerely seeks to know and follow the more excellent way, is, no doubt, nearly essential to a fervent life. Yet, even in this, I have known instances of conversion. In fact, life is a string of conversions; and in Religion, as well as out of it, it is "never too late to mend." I have known a man to expect conversion for thirty years, and when I last heard, it had not come yet; but, he still is sure it will come by God's infinite mercy. I should not like any strained efforts, on purpose to attain something definite before the Novice-ship was over; but only a sort of glad, wondering, humble gratitude at the greatness and goodness of your vocation and deep horror of a tepid self-seeking life.

To a Canoness of the Holy Sepulchre, who had sent him a small Crown of Thorns.

My child, you devised a gift for me of quite singular consolation; and I have hung it up over my *prie-dieu*, where, please God, it shall stay. I am sure in the plaiting of it you gained good thoughts of the Passion; and I take pleasure in St. Bernard's words: "Other imitators of Himself are crowned, but this is by assiduity helped by grace."

I think that applies to you and to me; it says every time *I* look at it, and I hope it always will, "blush to be the delicate member of a thorn-crowned Head." And nothing goes home more keenly than that. But I think you know, the more robust lesson of the Crown of Thorns is the hearty and even greedy acceptance of the weariness of life, which any knowledge of self that has growth in it must render more or less inevitable, and which is meant for Religious at least as much as, and I believe far more than, for those in the world. It is this which the silent, unchanging pain

of the Crown added to the Passion, and which in religious lives so often adds to the Passion still, because, even those who are eager after mortifications, pity themselves and repine at this, though unconsciously. At any rate it is a lesson which does not lose its savour *by keeping*. But, what is more to the point at present, is the "Rejoice and be glad," and that intensely as our holy Father puts it. A large heart understands how much our Lord is pleased with frank joy; there is a trust in it, and an intimacy quite peculiar; mind and give it Him. Courage and God bless you; thank all who pray for me, and I cannot deny that the thought of the prayers I get at New Hall *feeds* me.

To the same.

A few words on the perfect observance of each vow. The vows are the irrevocable acceptance of all the blessedness of my creatureship, of all that God desires in creating me, that I should be to Him and He to me. They put *me* out that *He* may reign.

Poverty, then, means, that I know that while He gives, I am His gift, no less belong to Him, and *must*. That having received it as a mendicant, I am just the same mendicant when in possession, and that this is as true of His caresses as of the food I eat. Poverty, I mean, makes me sit at table as if I had just been brought in out of the cold, and expected to be sent back to the cold when I had eaten what is given to me. Poverty leaves me after He has filled me with His highest lights and ecstatic graces, as well prepared to be relegated in darkness to the foot of the Crucifix, as if I had never heard His voice, nor known His love. Poverty, above all, makes me so convinced of my destitution, of all strength or goodness or constancy, that I *never despise* anything that may be ever so little.

so remotely a means to this. I am ashamed of my good clothes, ashamed that I am warm and comfortable, most of all, ashamed that I am considerately treated. This I take to be the poverty of Jesus Christ, and the "following of Jesus stripped of all things" as the *Imitation* says; pride and self-love lead to contempt of God. The practice of poverty in spirituals is to eagerly turn the least graces to account, in temporals to love the worst and not quite enough of it, with a certain simple feeling of doubt that you have any rights to it at all.

Chastity means that the God-Man loves me *all*, longs to possess me *all*, whom He made, loves the body which He took the likeness of for me, and delights in the consecration of it to Himself; and in its immolation by the imitation of His poverty, labour, and austerity. The practice is in the personal love which He has taught you, in the renunciation of every joy of the senses for their own sake. Love of Jesus leads to self-contempt. *Obedience* I do not think will ever be perfect till we sincerely think each one better than ourselves, and this practically, and in the individual. It is all very fine to talk of revering God in Superiors. We cannot do it until we are, as I say, sincere in revering God in everyone else. It meets me when alone as much as if I were with the community, or in my Superior's presence. *Obedience is the presence of God.*

To the same.

The next few words are to be on how to give most joy to the Sacred Heart. Well, you know what St. Austin says about faith: *Amicus Dei si fieri volo, ecce nunc fio.* You have not faith enough in your morning offering, and it affects your prayer and your union with our Lord equally. Understand how true union does not depend at all on

sensible impressions, but on the promptitude of preference in the higher will. To sensible impressions, then, you should study to make yourself indifferent better than you do; and see that it is error to be sad, because the devout feeling is wanting. To see this practically will be a great gain to you. On the other hand, real union which you ask for, as if it were a pinch of snuff, is nothing less than whatever our Lord Himself says to your inmost soul. It is the interior death to self, which the majority of holy persons die without ever having even conceived, and which the few who do conceive it, and perseveringly will it, cry out and groan at; it is so hard that Suarez said on his death-bed (and what they too will say at that hour) is the very reverse of their cry in the crisis of the never-finished fight: they say, I am in love with death.

It is good to know this, for it will not make you fear,—God's arms are round you; but remember that the fight is never done, and you must lay aside your armour with your breath. It consists in the promptitude of the heart's preference, even in the deepest depths of it, in which self insists on keeping a sanctuary. The battle is of two principal sorts—one against the innumerable indeliberate assertions of self, in which promptitude is everything; but watchfulness grows to a habit, and the growth is really rapid—though not perceptibly so—but from which, if watchfulness slackens, we soon may fall away to our grievous loss. The other is accidental, but tremendous; the times when our Lord asks sacrifices or humiliation, which, till we know ourselves, we think would cost us nothing, but, when the hour comes, draw blood. That is "real union here attained," which it never can be if you are discouraged or even astonished, but above all, *bitter*, when you fall.

You ask how to obtain devotion to the Sacred Heart? My dear child, only by the remembrance that His delight

is to be with us; that He loved me so much that He died for me, and, having died for me, He lived for me, and in living for me, *longs* for me; dwelling on it that He does long for me: that He is always living to make intercession for me; always *pleading* for me, and then, from this to say: "And what can I do for Him? How can I love Him?" You say that you cannot realize this. My child, I only know one way, "Ask and you shall receive," and as to doubting that if we really crave, He will refuse us, that would be the silliest and most foolish doubt we could have. He longs to hear us always; but *that* He longs to give us above all, He cannot refuse us THAT.

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Every day pray: My dear Lord, I want to be perfect, not for my own sake, but for Thine; so that if it please Thee that I should always have to battle against my passions, my vanity, my pride, my selfishness, my jealousy, even if on my dying bed I shall have to fight them, so long as I do struggle against them, *Fiat Voluntas Tua:* or, RATHER, if it please Thee, I *prefer* that it be so.

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To a Spiritual Child.

It is a golden time for you, you know, when you are getting precious drops from the grass of Gethsemane, and are giving the Heart that broke there a consolation more dear to Him than the tenderest sympathy. When we realize how very little we can do, then, and only then, can we value rightly our capacity of suffering, and understand how our Lord relies upon it in the few, few hearts that will consent to suffer for His sake. Nor can *any* suffering be like this—the lonely agony of the soul, dereliction, night.

It was because our Mother had this capacity as none other can have, that she could console Him as she did, and earn to be Queen of Martyrs.

To Nuns.—Devotion to our Lady.

I think the devotion which you want to our Lady comes from the thought of our own silliness; that, until what we say or offer has been put into her heart, it is too ragged and wretched to be laid at the Divine Feet; that it is from her heart it must get its value and beauty; and that she, good Mother, is busy all day long in picking up every little miserable thing which falls from us, and dipping them all into that abyss of purity, and light, and truth, and generosity, and familiar love, which her heart is; and then, giving them to Him, all so wonderfully transformed that we should not know them. Dear Mother! what, indeed, should we be without her? Be happy, my child, to be nothing, that God may be everything, and *that nothing* all falling to pieces; that our Lady may be always busy with her arms round you, keeping you altogether!

Try to have a little more worthy thoughts about our Lady. Comprehend that her love for you is far, far too great, too tender and sublime to be affected by your littleness and poverty, except to compassionate you more. You feel no love; well, do not expect to feel it; believe thoroughly that you do not deserve to feel it, and that feeling it would not make you better. The thought that she is discontented at the poverty or selfishness of your homage and love, is the very antipodes of the truth, and a little more sense of your nothingness will enable you to lay yourself lovingly before her, convinced that she knows you too well, and loves you a thousand times too well, to be angry with you when you commend to her "your every

trouble, your every sorrow, your life and your life's end." What you suffer from is want of light, and be content to suffer it. Offer up the Rosary as a string of pearls to our Lady; that is the truest idea; lay it at her feet, to give *her* honour, and glory, and pleasure.

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The most perfect image we can have of that absolute simplicity which is pure absence of self, is, of course in our Lady; the best example of it, I think, the Visitation. With the full knowledge of her election, she went to her act of charity, her mind full of *the end*, and of *the means*—God, I mean, and the creature in whom He was to be served. The same self-forgetfulness is generally to be clearly found in the martyrs; to die, for them, was nothing or was the most natural thing in the world, or, at the very most, was a thrilling subject of surprise and ravishing joy, which if self, was, at least, self in its right place. (Of course, I am proposing unattainable ideas, but only for the purpose of seeing the ideal.)

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My sins and infidelities are, after all, an accident. If I had been preserved from them all, I should still equally be in myself unworthy of any respect, worthy of all contempt. This was the humility of His handmaiden, which God regarded, and without which it would have been impossible for Him to be *near* her, in her bosom, in intimate confidence and affection; but because she really despised herself, it was possible, and gave Him glory. God and nothingness can only dwell together when nothingness knows and contemns itself.

Love of Poverty.

I am pleased, of course, to hear that your accommodations are growing. When you tell me that, perhaps, it will be on the community side as well, I do not know so well what to say. The evil one never could find such comfortable lodgings in the little place, as to take up a fixed abode, and you will all have to be much more on your guard, when more splendidly lodged.

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Religious Vocation.

The act of entering Religion is the most perfect and complete immolation and offering of oneself to God; the putting aside of all creatures for God. It is what Father Coleridge, in a beautiful sermon on death, defines *death* to be. It is, he says, the most complete giving up of oneself to God; of placing ourselves thoroughly, and with full trust, into His arms, facing the unknown, and binding our hands, and giving ourselves completely up into His. And so it is with religious life. We give ourselves up altogether to God, facing what is completely unknown to us; we bind our hands and feet, and have no longer any will of our own. We give ourselves up to Him, and go to the Cross with Him; the religious life is a crucifixion, complete renunciation.

On Truthfulness.

I do not hold that what you said was a lie; but I could never myself adopt the doctrine of being bound to put a second sense into my words. It was your duty to hide

something; and, as I have said to you before, it is not wrong to do right.

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It is very black, indeed, to contemn another for a fault you are not tempted to yourself; so *there* is something to humble yourself over for the next fifteen years to come. And so to-night go to our Lord, and make yourself *very* small indeed, at His Feet, and tell Him, that somehow or other, you have found out that you have been a little wretch; go to Him with a perfect trust, with *full* confidence. If every day we were to pray: "Lord, against whom I have sinned, have mercy on me," do not you think it would bear its fruit?

To a Nun.

It is not happily, necessary for me to tell you that, though I have not written, all that you have told me has been listened to with interest, and not forgotten. You have gone through a great deal of interior pain; but, like all that our Lord sends, it was useful and you *wanted it.* I felt the pain would *fix* the lesson I wanted you to learn.

If, my child, you want to make a peaceful and profitable use of such works as the *Etudes de Nicolas,*—you never said whether you were reading the *Etudes* or the *Plan Divin,*—you must have the clearest distinction in your mind between meditation and speculation; between a devout study of revealed truth, and a vain conjecture of the unrevealed. For Almighty God, you see, my child, when He condescended to lift the veil *so far* that our poor nature might be lifted up to Him by the high thoughts of the sons of God, and so learn how deeply our blind trust in Him is founded, yet, never meant that our trust should be less blind. And so He has left us here, immersed in a million problems, on which speculation can *only* be

mischievous, because we do not possess even the first terms of a possible solution. These touch the truths we meditate on all sides; but, though they may easily insinuate themselves, as distractions into our thoughts, we never shall wilfully speculate upon them without having to pay for our inordinateness; and here you see how intellectual pride is ever its own avenger, and brings down even deeply enlightened souls to darkness and infidelity. But the wise can smile at such temptations; and when they find their poor minds sadly questioning the motives of God's providence, they turn away adoring with unshaken hope from forbidden pastures, which will be laid open to us only when, as the *Miserere* has it, *God shall be justified when He is judged.* God means you to learn with a deep and clear knowledge what is, and what is not, good meat for the soul. . . . . I feel so deeply that a fault candidly owned can never prove for you anything but an ultimate good, that I should not refer to it, save to praise the simple explicitness of the avowal, but that I cannot feel sure you realize how much it cost our Lord. Our Blessed Lady absented herself from St. Alphonsus Rodriguez for eight days for a less thing; and though I am not, of course, making a comparison between your soul and his, yet, in sober truth, God has given you graces in plenty, enough to have made so deliberate a betrayal as that impossible. *You never can be too sorry for it.*

What God wished and what was needed, was to make the past a grace for the future. I say to you what St. Paul said to the Corinthians, I cannot be sorry for having made you sad, for the sadness will be your future joy; and now I shall trust you more than ever, as our Lord knows, and I would always rather have a grace which has been earned with tears than one given gratis, and your tears are of those which shall be reaped in joy.

A Christmas Greeting to a Religious.

24th December.

Toto orbe in pace, when all the world was in peace He entered it. Self and Christmas joy are strangers. You left home for God, and that surely ought not to make you sad on the day when God left home for you. Devote yourself to this one thing, make everybody happy.

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To another Religious.—Bethlehem.

After all, what *is* the truth? That our Blessed Lord is there with His Manhood, with His Body, with His Heart loving you, beneath that small white form of the Sacrament, and there in Heaven at His Father's right hand, in whatever form He ever was on earth, He is that most truly still—still a Baby in the Crib, still a crucified and agonizing Man upon the Cross, because the Divine Person who really suffered these things is the Person of the Eternal God, who is listening to you while you pray, and while you pray to Him before the Crib, and speak to Him of the childhood which He assumed for you. He is all there as vividly and as truly in the loving Humanity you talk to, as if you had been actually in Bethlehem, and had pressed to your heart there the warm flesh which is now your daily bread.

The two following letters were intended for a community, and written in the playful style the Father was so wont to use.

A Pious Custom.

Passage from a rare spiritual book, which Father Dignam is *not* going to write in future time.

Among the minor, but still most precious blessings of community life is that, by the comments on the holy Rule, and the admonitions which are addressed to all, and by the zeal of our Superiors, we are saved from the danger (so great for those who live in solitude) of adopting erroneous principles, or of falling by degrees into remiss and irreligious habits. In many fervent communities there is a custom by which, as soon as a Superior has adverted to some point of discipline, or remarked on any breach of Rule which has prevailed, she who may feel her conscience touched as having been guilty on this point, instantly kneels down in presence of the community, nor does she rise from her knees until she has received a signal from the Superior. So that there are frequently seen many Religious thus kneeling at the same time during the conference, when the matter adverted to is of a commoner kind, such as silence or punctuality might be. And thus, in a most sweet and easy way, is reparation made for faults; and the evil prevented from going far.

If, then, there be those who have not so wholesome a custom (and it is not convenient that new customs should be hastily introduced into religious houses), with how much the greater care should each Religious strive humbly to profit by the admonitions thus given, by taking earnestly to herself whatever her conscience may reproach her with, and purposing to do penance, and amend the same, as also by preserving a wise and modest reserve within herself, as often as her conscience shall pronounce her free, lest, as

has sometimes happened, her self-love may have beguiled that poor conscience, and so hoodwinked her that she know not her own doings. "*For not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom God commendeth.*" ("The rest is unhappily lost," wrote the Father playfully, as he concluded his letter.)

To the same Community.—The Harsh Creditor.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE LEARNED EVANGELIST.

1. All authors agree, of course, that the debt forgiven by God never revives.

St. Matt. xviii. 23—35.

2. The parable is explained variously, and some consider the fact of the Lord making the debt revive, contains no doctrine at all, but merely refers to the Roman law (then probably in vogue among the Jews, who were subject to them), which did annul gifts in consequence of subsequent ingratitude.

3. Some teach that the meaning is to show the power of unforgivingness, insomuch, that though, in every other respect, the sinner were penitent, still on this account alone God would never pardon him. Neither of these, it seems to me, goes far enough to explain the force of the parable, "until he has paid all the debt," so shall your Heavenly Father do to you.

Cornelius à Lapide, however, says truly that as the bad servant, by his want of forgivingness, commits a mortal sin, he really does revive the guilt, from which eternal Hell will not free him.

St. Thomas Aquinas says the notable ingratitude of this sin aggravates it excessively.

Suarez says that the soul living in this merciless disposition, experiences a return of all the former sins, signified by the ten thousand talents, and so is damned for the same kind of sins committed over again.

Lastly, Father Dignam (a great authority) says that for other sins God condemns, but still with mercy; but that "judgment without mercy" is reserved for those only who, knowing their own unworthiness, still hate and judge their fellow-worms. God's love pleads for all others, even the reprobate; but here His very love is bound to make the condemnation greater. Our Lord means this by the figure of an impossibility.

To the Mother General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.

Holy Cross, 17th July, 1888.

My dear Child in J. C.,

I learnt long ago to say at certain times when there is nothing else to be said: It is a humiliation, and so it *must* be good. Anything also which forces us to believe in holy government, and to disbelieve in government of expediency, *must* be good. Look on it all as a new gift from God. God bless you, my dearest child!

. . . . . .

May God bless all you have on hand! I was greatly pleased with your two local Superiors, who have been to see me—*there is formation indeed!*

To the Same.

You have had an eventful year, and I think you must be forced more and more to recognize this, that your Institute

is like a cork in the infinite ocean of God's Providence, and to submit yourself to His will. X. is not bad at heart, though never generous, and generosity is necessary for a true vocation for the Institute.

To the Same.

Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, 1891.

I hope you will never lose your pluck.

In the early days of the Institute it was hard for you to *believe* what I said about its future; but you *did* do so. You were as wax in my hands, and so I wrote in your *Imitation* on your feast in 1884: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee.*

Now I can write still, more gladly: *Jesus saith unto her, Did I not say to thee, If thou wilt believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?*

To the Same.

December 24th.

I am too late for your Christmas Day—but as we shall meet at midnight (in spirit) it is scarcely too late either. I send you, my dearest child, the very heartiest blessing, and may the Heart of the Divine Child give you assurance of Its mercy and Its love, and grace to do the great work well. Happy Christmas to you and to your children big and little *without* and *within*.

To the same, after his Silver Jubilee.

Holy Cross, St. Helens.
September 23, 1892.

My dear Child,

I find Jubilees are more trying things than I was aware of. Only the tiny ceremony on Wednesday morning early was a pure joy to me. It was quite unanticipated and I must own quite unmanned me[1] I never realized so vividly before how truly all good gifts come from Him as rays from the sun, as waters from the fountain—letters and gifts were coming all day long, and all seemed to have God's stamp on them, so that I was overwhelmed with the sense of His presence in them in a way I cannot describe. How sure I feel that He will not forget one of the givers for His own sake.

My meeting with Father Woollett was simply God-sent. I just missed my train by a moment; being compelled to wait, turned reluctantly to St. Wilfrid's for dinner—not a soul at home. "Oh yes, there is Father Woollett, who arrived last night. Come in!" "You are Father Woollett?" "I am, but who are you?" We had half an hour's talk then, nearly all about you, and another half-hour before I left. He was so delighted, and not more delighted than I. The old dear, he would I am sure, come here to see me, had we only room, but he is quite too feeble, or rather tottery—to move about. He was profuse, I need not say, in affectionate messages.

God bless you, my dearest child.

Ever in J. C.,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

[1] When the Sisters from the Hospital (Poor Servants of the Mother of God) gave him their address and offering.—*Memoir*, p. 411.

Father Sydney Woollett, S.J., had been one of the Catholic Chaplains to the army during the Crimean War, and had afterwards spent thirty-three years in the West Indies, constantly visiting the outlying "Stations" in Jamaica, to minister to the scattered group of Catholics.

Father Dignam little supposed the Father "quite too feeble to move" would survive him for over three years; we subjoin a letter written by Father Woollett after receiving a copy of the Memoir of Father Dignam.

You must have thought me rude and ungrateful not to have acknowledged and thanked you for Father Dignam's Memoir—I beg pardon for my neglect and attempt to make an explanation by way of excuse. On my return from St. Beuno's I first saw and first heard of the Book—but I soon heard that Father Eyre during a Retreat he gave to the community at Stonyhurst College, read many passages out of it, and was evidently gratified and taken with it. Before this and quite independent of any one's opinion, I read it through and was so pleased with it, that as soon as I had read it, I *again* read it through, so let me at least say that I was much pleased and gratified with it. It came just in time to be of service to me during my Retreat. It is usually spoken of here, as the book so often quoted by Father Eyre during the Retreat he gave. I have lent it for the present to Father Cardwell—I am indeed greatly indebted to you.

Father Joseph Sydney Woollett died, fortified with all the Last Sacraments, on February 7th, 1898, at Stonyhurst College.

To a Sister of the Institute of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.

Humility neither reckons nor weighs her crosses; her faults she regards as gain, as food which nourishes her, and of which contrition is the salt. Our Lord wants you to smile at Him. It is the pride at the bottom of your heart which does not let you believe in God's love for you; this has been, we may say, the cause of all the heresies in the world. Our baseness has nothing to do with God's love for us. He loves us because of His own beauty and immensity of love. He sees in us a capacity of being loved and made beautiful; but let us always remember it is our nothingness, made beautiful by His Omnipotence. The thing is, when the clock stops you lose the supernatural. Take a quarter of an hour of prayer before our Lord, not because the bell rings, but to fight to get back to the supernatural, to get back to Him.

If scolding is good for you when you deserve it, then it is good when you do not deserve it. In scoldings consider if God is offended; if He is not, then what matter?

Remember humiliation is a *good thing*, suffering is a *good thing*. *Never* be discouraged if all your life is spent in tumbling down and getting up. Pull your veil and say, Well, it *is* on my head. Let nothing damp your courage.

The loneliness of the desert is to be found in religious life. You were brought into Religion to be a saint. What way is to be wished for but God's way? To be ground like wheat, to have your heart cut. Not always to seek sympathy, nor always to find help; for when you are left without, you will be forced on God, and made strong as steel (*Imitation*, Bk. II. ch. vii.). After trying your best, when all is a failure and everthing in a mess—*be cheerful.*

Do not mind your interior feelings, which sometimes come from the weather, from health, or occupations. Keep your will *fixed* upon God. God never changes. He is always the same, the one unchangeable Good.

. . . . . .

His love is the only thing that is eternal. When you are dying, everything else will be as dross in your hands. There must be personal union, personal relations with our Lord; throw yourself in solitude at His Feet, and implore Him to bathe you in contrition, to make you grieve over your faults as against Him, to regard Him personally in all you do, to weigh things only in reference to Him, never to put Him in the second place, and to grieve intensely if you find you have done so. Say to yourself, His love is the one only good thing this life can give me. You have been cowardly in your relations towards God; be more childlike, more simple; remember God is everything, and everything else is nothing.

The chief thing is the thought of God's great love for us. Come to Him, who has infinite tenderness and infinite power; who can forgive all, and does; who can make reparation for all, and does make it; and, after all the weakness and the miseries, come back to His Sacred Heart.

Do not think dryness in prayer is our Lord sending you punishment; whatever He sends is for your good. Never argue with the devil. Profess your faith; especially dwell upon your own nothingness. Humble yourself before God, saying with holy Job, "Even though Thou shouldest lead me down into Hell, yet will I trust Thee. Have pity upon me, for I am a weak little fool."

Do not be analyzing if it is indifference or selfishness, only pray to be true. *O Lord, make me true.*

Prayer is the life of the soul. Humble yourself before prayer. With what reverence you should begin placing

yourself in God's presence, a creature before its Creator, a contemptible worm; then, kneeling down with respect, adoration, veneration, making the sign of the Cross with deep reverence, beg for grace to be heartily ashamed of yourself, to despise yourself thoroughly.

Our Lady at the foot of the Cross was not thinking of herself, but of our Lord; so do not think of yourself or of your own spiritual profit, but rather of uniting yourself with our Lord, to make atonement to His Father.

The struggle may be severe, you may bear the marks of the wounds. Well, our Lord's wounds were the mark of His love for us. *Sursum corda.* Our Lord did not give you all He has without intending to crown it.

When tempted to criticize, know that your own worldly heart is not a judge.

"Go to our Lady, whose love is as the sea; pray to her to help you to overcome your faults, to obtain for you never to commit a deliberate fault, never to offend God. She will not only make you very good, but very happy."

To another Sister of the same Institute.

It is not good to try to check the inclination to be very sympathetic; some, trying to do that with the view of being detached and mortified, went so far as to lose their power of sympathizing altogether, and yet our Lord's Heart was the most sympathetic that ever beat.

A desire to be a saint is compatible with humility. It is your vocation, you are meant to be one, and thank God you have not left off aspiring to what your vocation calls you. It is not from anything in yourself you hope for it, but from God's grace and mercy. You feel there is no backbone in your good resolutions. This feeling means

self-reliance; you are sorry because you find you have not got anything in yourself you can lean upon; no, you must lean upon God's mercy. To be sad and discouraged after a fall means you are sorry for your own sake, because you failed. To be sorry for God's sake is to humbly acknowledge your weakness, say you are very sorry and ashamed and won't do it again; but as for the feeling of self-contempt and humiliation, that does not matter at all.

Never let your thoughts run on as they like without your will having any part. Reverie is letting your thoughts go according to nature; recollection, according to grace: in reverie you think about just what you please; in recollection you think about what God pleases, and keep in His presence. What we have got to do is to try to please God in every action, to do all purely for Him, to live in His presence, but remember all this is contrary to our nature, and if you do not keep on reminding yourself (without straining your head) and making acts, you will soon come to live a very natural sort of life.

If you do not revere silence, you will lose prayer, recollection holy inspirations. Get the habit of talking to God about everything; the great thing is to have the desire to do this.

Always acknowledge your weakness; if you find yourself doing things from human respect, tell our Lord how sorry you are, and beg for grace to do things purely for Him. If you do not feel you can wish people to despise you, tell Him so, and beg for grace to arrive at that too. If you often fail, say how sorry you are, and acknowledge that you do not deserve to be helped at all; but that you will go on trying. Do the work, and leave success to God. The devil would like you to make a hundred particular examinations. Never mind past or future, only this—each action done as well as possible for God.

Only mortify yourself with a view to increase of earnestness, never put mortification before doing your work well, seeing after things, and never be singular. Seeking mortification in everything means within limits, or you might carry it to any length; as, for instance, I would rather take my dinner than not take it, therefore it would be more mortified not to take it. No, it is the principle that is set before us, that suffering and the Cross are the things to be valued and desired. Do not be like a straw that is carried by the stream, but like a fish that swims against it, picking up food on every side, always busily on the look-out.

You can never be a good nun, or a happy, or peaceful, or fruitful nun, unless you submit your judgment entirely to your Superior, irrespective of her qualities; and no one can make you do this, it rests with yourself. We must accept our faults, acknowledge our miseries. I am nothing, have nothing, can do nothing, and the pain is very great of feeling you are no better than when you were a novice; and so by degrees, God plants humility in the soul. Suppose you did succeed in your charge, and were praised, remember that you and those who praise you are all dust together. God is the only good. God is everything.

Is it likely that after praying all your life to our Lady to help you at the hour of death, and to God—"lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—that in that hour of need, temptations should be allowed to overcome you? God's patience never comes to an end; it is like the letter H, whichever way you turn it up it is the same. When tormenting doubts or questions come, say, *I do believe;* if the devil sees me turn them into beautiful acts, he will soon take himself off. Do not feel obliged to be always praying for souls; if God wants you to, He will inspire you; pray as you feel inclined. If you have to do with externs, do not listen to detraction, even with the

view of bringing people to a better frame of mind, say, "Now you know it is detraction, I can't listen to that." Though always showing readiness to help if you can, and sympathize, let them see you have other things waiting for you to attend to.

To the Superior of the Perpetual Adoration Convent, Wexford.

Holy Cross, 25th September, 1892.

I suppose it must have been through the intervention of Mother Magdalen; but, by whatever means, I found among my Jubilee offerings, one from you and your dear community, one rich and precious, as well as so beautiful, and so truly and tenderly kind. Well, I, of course, am forced to own that I have never done any, the least thing to deserve it, and can only remind myself that charity *is* poured forth; and that those who love best and are kindest, love not for the sake of those they do good to, but for His sake, whose Heart loves all so dearly. Your lovely card, then, is a speaking picture to me of Jesus' charity to the undeserving. Though undeserving, however, I am not ungrateful. My Mass cannot be said henceforth in the Sanctuary of the Pleading Heart, without an earnest memory of those warm Wexford souls who, out of their excessive charity, have deigned to be so very, very kind, even to me. May our dear Lord give each and every one of you His own best gift!

A Message to a Dying Nun.

Tell the dear child that I want her to say, like St. Martin, "If I can be of any use, I am ready for work

still." She must feel that, whether she praises our Lord in Heaven, or serves Him here, is not her affair, *but His*—and so the "Take and receive, O Lord," will go forth very warm, and prompt, and generous; but I have another message: I want her to do all, all she can with the Sacred Heart for priests. Persuade her that she cannot do a better nor grander thing for our Lord's love, than to offer everything, sacrifice everything, *immolate* everything for them. I want her to make reparation for all that in priests is weak and unworthy, and which renders them unfit to go to the altar, to clasp the Lord's Body, and feed upon Him daily, reparation for their thoughtlessness of the dignity and the power of the priesthood. How unutterably great it is, how Godlike in its character—with what shame it ought to strike us when we consider its wonderful efficacy for good or harm, and how much a few holy priests could do to repair the sins of others! If she will give all to gain this grace for me, I promise her our Lord will be moved as He was when her namesake (St. Gertrude) denuded herself of her merits, and will take her into His own arms, and clothe her with Himself.

To a Spiritual Child.

Never forget to pray for priests; always keep priests before your mind. You cannot do better for the dear interests of our Lord, than to keep a corner in your love of the Sacred Heart for priests.

To his Sister.

. . . . . .

These battles with one's own heart are, in truth, agonies, and do not depend on the reality of what we are fighting

about. Your resolutions (after retreat) are of the very best sort, full of the true Ignatian humility—which, the older one grows, one finds more and more to be rare—the humility which, recognizing our weakness, believes greatly in the need of foresight, preparation, watchfulness, and *taking all the means*. This is not, of course, a showy humility, but the very centre and reality of it. . . . That letter of X.'s reminds me of some elderly single people I once knew. What trifling things (generally pure myths) used to rouse them altogether to enthusiasm, excitement, fury! they all seemed to go cracked at once, and to the same tune; and then, when I said, "But let us first be sure of our facts; let us hear the other side," how angry they were! Oh, my dear, let us remember we were "created to praise." There is only one thing for you and me to do, one thing to think of or value—the inner life which alone can make us like our Master; certainly, the older we grow, all else grows smaller. "He does much, who loves much." . . . If you were in disgrace with me, and not with Almighty God, it ought not to matter much, and if you were in disgrace with Almighty God, the right thing would be to be willing to be ashamed of yourself and only sorry because He has suffered at your hands. The more He pardons, the more motive for our shame.

Before his Retreat.

You must make a wig of hot coals during these days that are coming, pray practically, not beating the air, but praying for a poor sinner.

There is a little bit of one of St. Francis Xavier's letters to our holy Father which makes a capital prayer: "O Father of my soul, most deeply venerated, I beg and pray of thee as if I were at thy feet, never to cease thy

prayer to God for me, that I may clearly know and exactly do His most blessed will;" and this is what I should like you to say to him for me, insisting specially on the *do*. I offer my retreat for the consolation of the Divine Heart in the conversion and sanctification of priests.

. . . . . .

There is one big sin left in you yet, my dear, that I have never thought it worth while to tilt against, while more subtle ones were needing care.

You are full of ambition about me. You will, as usual, take some little time to see it, and a little more to see that this too is but a form of self. After that it will not give you much trouble. . . . I must tell you how gratified I was at your letter, with all its maturity and wisdom. My own wish would be to keep lots of silence on the eves of great feasts. . . . I have been writing to your Mother. You must be on your guard to keep your judgment in submission to hers after my advice just as much as before, and encourage her to act upon her own judgment whenever she has matured it, promising the heartiest co-operation whatever that judgment may be.

. . . . . .

Look here, "all things work together for good to those who love God." Well, that is in itself a final cure for "droops," or, what is better, making the droops work together for good. If I have done well, thank God; if not, why, thank God, and so always thank God, and go forwards.

Certainly, if I did not make flour out of my miseries, I should go hungry to bed. Now, as to your question, the point is whether it be lawful to do an indifferent thing because you like it. I say, and Father Provincial agrees with me, it is lawful; and by virtue of an ordinary intention of all we do A.M.D.G., it is meritorious. Others say you must have some other and higher good in your intention

than because you like it. Well, such doctrine makes it right to eat too much if you eat enough, which is contradictory. It confuses temperance and mortification, it makes works of supererogation obligatory. Practically, to my mind, it makes souls anxious, and deprives them of the joy of generosity, which (as it seems to me) it blots out of the catalogue of virtues. A good soul wishing to carry out this theory, once caught in the rain, called a cab, and while it was coming she was thinking about the higher good, perhaps it was real danger to health to get wet, or perhaps she ought to save her clothes, or perhaps she was bound to accept the humiliation of telling cabby she had a scruple and had changed her mind. Well, you know, in my opinion, that is not the way to be a saint, but a mad woman.

All this does not feed the heart, does it? and you, poor child, are longing for more of love, and less of lessons. But is it not true, we have these hearts of ours to conquer, and take away from things present to give them to Him, who alone can fill them? All other love is, after all, self-love, however delicately masked. You say *He* never laughed; no, certainly, and you may be sure the more we grow like Him the less we shall laugh. *Laugh* mind, I do not believe St. Francis of Sales *laughed.* But, at the same time, a laugh which is incompatible with supreme knowledge, and supreme union with God, is by no means a bad thing—a very, very useful creature. And a good laugh I had after my night's journey to Ireland. I said Mass in a side chapel of our grand church in Gardiner Street, and then thought of *bed?* Not a bit of it, such a programme mapped out; and when I asked for a jolting car, Father Minister said: "Just listen to the Saxon insulting us! 'tis a jaunting car you mean."

I went out to Milltown, when I had a long chat with the Provincial, and met some dear old friends of long ago. As for my last letter to you, poor despised letter, it will take

its place in ascetic literature beside St. Anthony's sermon to the fishes, and St. Francis' exhortation to Brother Wolf, and Sister Sheep.

. . . . . .

You will think, for sure, that I am never going to write to you; the Apostleship would give me more than I could do for forty-eight hours in the day. I am having many blessings, and many checks, and I want prayers tremendously. So you must heap on me your coals of prayers, and patience; and by-and-bye, we will have a long chat together. . . . Certainly it is right to aim at never allowing anything to disturb us. Do not you know the picture of St. Ignatius? "He governed himself in everything, great and small, by the highest reason: he was master over all his passions, and even of the first movements of his soul; thus, he always appeared imperturbable and calm; and thus his soul glided without obstacle towards eternal shores." . . . When I spoke to you of the selfishness at the bottom of so much of the affection shown to us by those we help, I was only trying in a blundering way to teach you, that, if we could only see all about it, it would not add to our conceit, and we should not be much tempted to reckon on it. . . . Lift up your head above the *little waves*, and believe that when the things of to-day go as you would not have them go, that our Lord is master of them still. Leave all things then; let things alone, till God shall mark His time, not ours, for their calm and profitable discussion. I dwell on my first memento now-a-days, and the souls sometimes pass in rank and file before me, before I can get on to others; I ask that in measure it may be given to them all to wish for the only wish worth wishing, which is the compendium of my own prayer for myself, for you, and for all, *Nudus nudum sequar*. God bless you, my dear, dear child.

To Mrs. P., one of the tradespeople of St. Helens, whose daughter had just ended her life of devoted piety and long sufferings.

31st July, 1880.

Father Egger has been kind enough to send me a memorial of poor Mary Ann's death, and I must write you a line to tell you how very much I feel for you in your great sorrow. For though I know, thank God, how truly resigned you are to our Lord's holy Will, and though your faith will make you sure that the blow has come in kindness and love, both to her and to you; yet all this will not make the pain one bit less keen, to be separated from a child whom you love so devotedly, and watched over so tenderly, and so long. Poor child! her life was, indeed, one long preparation for death, and she bore her heavy cross for so many years so sweetly and patiently; and our Lord has forgotten none of it. She has earned for you unspeakable merits, and your own death-bed will be free from a great care, now that you have seen her safely on her way to God, before your own hour arrives. I shall pray for her, as, indeed, she well deserves; for she has been a bright example of faith and true charity to our people; and I hope that God will sweeten your sorrow, and fill your last days with blessings and *great peace*. God bless you, my dear child; pray for me in charity, and believe me ever,

Affectionately yours in J.C.,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

To Lady ——.

My dear Child in J. C.,

Your letter made me indeed glad and grateful; for it is a deliverance from saddest human affliction.

Yet, as I feel sure, you will thank God for all eternity for having let you suffer it. I know there is truth in the lesson you draw from the sleeping Apostles; yet I am intensely convinced that even God's punishments here are blessings, are graces. I would not have you strain your anxiety to be found watching. Dwell most, my child, on this: St. Ignatius, in his contemplation for obtaining love, makes its highest exercise in the immolation of everything to His will. "Take, O Lord, take, for it is yours; take, for from my heart I give to you my memory, my intellect, my entire will. Whatever I have, take it." What God does, this is best for His glory, and must be best for me. Therefore, as the *Imitation* says: "If Thou wouldst have me under the shadow, be Thou blest; if Thou wouldst have me in sunshine, be Thou blest again." (Book III. chap. xvii.) That, my most dear child, is the especial chapter for you.

Ever in J. C.,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

To a Spiritual Child.—A Great Error.

The error was that the Sacred Heart seemed so much more ready to grant temporal favours and external spirituals, than the interior graces prayed much harder for.

The small attempt at heresy is refuted in this way: In many hearts given to God, self-esteem and self-seeking show themselves in nothing so much as a passion for results.

In the office[1] here we require a good many pigeon-holes; and to get things safely into their right holes and duly labelled is good work done. But in the process of self-sanctification it is quite different; and no one in their senses will presume to say—no, not even when the evidence of those senses seems to proclaim it—that when I have knocked and hammered, I have not got in. Our nearness to our Lord will depend less, I think, in Heaven on the degree of goodness we have got to, than on what it cost to get there. Hence often, often, the best answer to our knocks is that we are bid to knock again, and please Him more by knocks than if we were let in; and we should know this and be generous, for we hurt Him and make Him say: "Oh, thou of little faith," if we pout as unanswered; and it is not true. As to what are well called external spirituals, they are God's play-ground, and He loves to disport Himself there at ease. Who is like unto God?

To A., a Lady holding a high position.

I rejoice much at your happiness in gathering so many dear ones round you; and you must not let it detract in the least from that happiness if equanimity sometimes, or even often, suffers. You are not worse, you know, because circumstances bring a weakness more before your eyes, or the eyes of others; on the contrary, if only prompt and cheerful, in following Father Grou's advice, "raise yourself and think no more about it," you have gained.

I was much interested in what you spoke of in your longer letter, which made you call yourself a spoilt child. It, of course, *might* be God's will that such suffering as that should come often in your later life. I am very glad you

[1] Messenger Office.

were vigilant to notice it; and what I would counsel above all is, *not to fear it*, though it is quite certain to be very keen pain, but it is a pain which will always sanctify without fail as long as you pray. I would often expressly include it in my offering, and overcome timidity about it.

. . . . . .

I want to remind you strongly, that nothing but pride would ask our Lord to stay away, because your faults escaped in temper. *Never* doubt when that suggestion comes, that you have heard the devil's whisper. And mind, I quite remember the extra force such a suggestion acquires when the Communion is received at home, and, as it were, in the very presence of the fault, and of those who have witnessed it. Remember then, that I say *never*.

. . . . . .

I am afraid you are not doing my prescription much credit yet, or I should not hear of "as soon as I get a little stronger." I should like to administer a strong dose of spiritual quinine all round, to make you all feel that these days, when the world does not wag too joyously, are the real "growing days for Heaven." "Oh, if thou didst but see, thou wouldst not desire the joyous days of this life."[1] Do you remember that, child?

. . . . . .

You must put away promptly the sad feeling which follows infirmities, petulance, little excesses in food, &c. Let the act of self-humiliation be as energetic as you can, the *sursum corda* a strong one; and then no more of it. Lean with all your weight on our Lord without fear; encourage yourself to rejoice at the recognition of your

[1] *Messenger*, vol. ii. p. 3.

incapacity and mistakes. All will go as He wills, if only you resolutely maintain brightness; but this must be, not only *without*, but true and *within*. And there is no reason, nor a shadow of one, why this should not be entire, real, hearty. Snubbings and less consideration are not things to be weighed, they are often the fruits of the best and most solid kindness and devotedness, and it would be too bad to pine about them. They are "the Master's wages," and the best of all. Look up and trust through and through. He has care of all. God bless you.

. . . . . .

Ah, how astonished we shall be to see how much more ashamed we have been about our *bêtises* than about our sins. You made me laugh when you said, what should I have been had I carried out all you told me! Why, my child, almost any six words of the *Imitation* contain more than most can do in a lifetime, and yet the *Imitation*, as a rule, only preaches the second degree of humility. Indeed, there is grave truth in what Père Surin says, "The multiplication of methods is one of the obstacles which impede our stability," and his advice to live in the moment with all the energy of perfection we can, and control both retrospections and anticipations for that purpose, is one of the golden things which a good will is never tired of beginning again.

To a Business Man with many occupations.

1. When a busy man is extremely tired and weary, he is justified in going to bed after a short examination, and a sign of the Cross, telling our Lord He is unable to do more, greatly as he wishes he could. Our Lord will help him like a most tender mother, who is ever on the watch to succour her child.

2. Resolve to perform as perfectly as possible, the devotion you have chosen, and do not crowd in fresh ones.

3. Continue your present method of prayer; and do not let the devil upset you, he is sure to choose that time for temptation.

4. In order to help you to meet the trials of life, I would advise you to study well two chapters of the *Imitation*, xxxvi. and xlvi., of Book III.

5. Forget yourself utterly at Holy Communion. See nothing but the Body of your Lord and the Angels.

6. Always beware of any *habit* of sin.

To a Spiritual Child.

Dreamland is a land where time is lost, Purgatory gained, and self nourished. Do not go there any more; do the duty of the hour with all your might, and give way to no fancies. Dwell *only* on such thoughts as make you glad, humble and devoted, and thank God for all that comes. Cease pondering over yourself; be more simple and direct. Discontented and dejected reflections about yourself, never can do any good; but, on the contrary, produce weariness, human respect, cowardice, and a sense of loss of strength. Simplicity and directness do not prevent due examination of conscience, they make the examination a definite act. Don't let your courage fail amidst trials. Look very straight to our Lord. He will take the helm Himself, and you will be safe, though it may not seem at the moment that He is keeping you clear of rocks—the end will prove so. . . . My child, do not be too surprised at your capacity of treating God badly, or, to say better, your incapacity of doing otherwise, but exult in Him without arguing the point. We are always more profitably employed in praising God, than in even despising ourselves. . . . I hope the

desire of spiritual advancement will never fail. *My soul hath desired to desire*, though the temptation to impatience at the exceedingly unpractical results is very strong. Surin, in his delicious description of the character of the love of God, divides it into two parts: (1) a tranquil sorrow for our bad employment of time; (2) an attentive application to turning the present moment to the best account. Well, when our experience and knowledge are able to understand, that in this brief, simple, unexaggerated formula, is a whole life's work in sure and certain peace, then our feet are on the rock; still, as long as pride lives, we shall be tempted to resentment at the perpetual relapses, and humiliating inefficacy of even our best efforts. It is by this we gradually acquire genuine contented self-contempt, and hearty abandonment to God. What you immediately want is to understand, that after being told, try to do this, try to stick to that, and are compelled to answer, I *don't* do it, I do it less than before,—this is not, as you would be inclined to believe, evidence of insincerity, but of imbecility. Until we have in simplicity called ourselves imbecile, we can scarcely explain God's endless and boundless patience. . . .

Never go to bed at night without an act of cheerfulness. Say to our Lord: "I have laid down all my burden, all these sins and faults at Thy feet; how can I think Thy Sacred Heart is not great enough, or loving enough, to wash them all away?" God cares nothing for your miserable little failings; He can blow them all away: but He does care for the humility which can see them and be sorry for them, and the courage which rises up and goes to Him after all. If you commit the same faults fifty times in one day, and fifty times you rise up and go to Him with confidence, that will give God real glory.

To C. R.

My dear Child,

By this time you ought to know that these fits of being miserable are part of your natural selfishness. If you give way to them and cry, you only give the devil more power to tempt you.

If you begin in earnest to make many great acts of contrition, and insist upon thinking about our Lord's pain upon the Cross, you soon are happy. Think how pleasant it must be for our Lord to look at you sitting there crying just after He has forgiven you all your sins and washed your soul with His Precious Blood! If you tried you could not count all the favours He has given you, and this is your gratitude!

I should be very glad to see you again when you can come, when I hope you will have a better account to give me. God bless you, my child!

Ever yours in J. C.,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

After his Jubilee.

Holy Cross, 23rd October, 1892.

It is true, my child, that I am more busy than I used to be, and have to leave a great many letters a long time, but I am sorry for the anxiety I have caused you. Your letter gave me much pleasure, and doubly so because of the form which your charity took—*Communions.* They are, as you know so well, the best alms you can give me. God was indeed good to me, the many holy prayers and 150 Masses made me feel He was indeed merciful. God bless you!

Ever in J. C.,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

The two preceding letters were addressed to one who was for many years housekeeper in the presbytery where Father Dignam lived. She gladly bears witness to his virtues of self-forgetfulness, and gentle charity, and to his habits of constant prayer. When she was in service elsewhere, she wrote to Father Dignam, and received several kind answers full of sympathy. But after his removal to Wimbledon came total silence on his part, and this became a heavy trial of patience, and it broke down. A letter was then a great effort to Father Dignam; but her cry of distress went to his heart, and he wrote with his trembling hands one of his last letters.

Wimbledon College, 18th February, 1892.

My dear Child,

In the month of November I had a stroke of paralysis, which prevented me from writing and speech. This is the reason which prevented you from getting news of me. It is a pity to think the wrong reasons for my silence, but especially when it is a bad one. I was very sorry you had been so ill. Do not omit to pray for me; and believe me ever, in J. C.,

A. DIGNAM, S.J.

To an Invalid.

To sanctify yourself in the midst of confusion, to meet with disappointments all through this life,—this is God's will for you.

Reproach: (1) to bear it *silently;* (2) to bear it ***patiently;*** (3) to bear it *gladly.* Then you will feel that you are,

indeed, united to our Lord in His Passion. He was reviled, and did not revile. It is the work of a lifetime.

Let your First Friday prayer be, that the number of those who *really* desire to make atonement, may increase; sin goes on for ever. Pray that those who have a *passion for making amends*, may increase.

It is a *reality*. Our Lord suffered on the Cross all the pains of those who refuse to suffer, and *every pang, every pain we bear for Him relieves Him, and wins His love and gratitude.*

Striving to mortify self. We must be cheerful over it, —*that* is what pleases God. The more cheerful we are, the more we shall see; but there will always be more we shall never see, till we are at His feet. My God, I am glad I am nothing that Thou mayest be *all*. But the *reparation* of this must be kept in mind, the pain He suffers from sinners, the oceans of pain only known to Himself.

To a Lady when she was going to live far away from a Church.

It has come then! Well, I am very, very glad, and have no fear whatever about it. There will be pain, and great pain no doubt, for the transition from plenty to privation will secure that; but it will do you good. We are too easily persuaded that the things we are used to are necessities. God is independent of them, and everything else. And the Sacraments themselves are creatures like others, and when once His will is our guide, we are as sure that we shall want for nothing, were we in the desert with Paul the Hermit, as living next door to Farm Street Church. Never fear! Still I am glad of what you say about your Communions; for, as I have said, the transition is inevitably

most trying, and I have found it before now difficult to train souls to bear it perfectly. So when you tell me, "from it I hope I shall have the grace to give it up cheerfully," I think, come now, there spoke my good child; perhaps now, I shall not be disappointed. Still, you know, even if I am, and you break down and are a baby, no matter. We know by this time, how to turn even such things to good orofit. "*All things work together for good to them that love God.*"

Section IV.

NOTES OF CONFERENCES AND SERMONS.

Recollections of a Sermon preached at the Profession of a Canoness of the Holy Sepulchre.

New Hall, Essex, 25th January, 1887.

"With *His Own* ring has my Lord Jesus Christ bound me to Himself, and as a spouse has He adorned me with a crown." Venerable Bede, in his homily during the Octave of All Saints, says of sacrifice, that "in the heavenly camp, peace and war have each their flowers, with which the soldiers of Christ are crowned, and that He who gives the red will also give the white crown," meaning that the crown may be earned no less in the quiet walls of a convent than in the amphitheatre of the martyr. And this martyrdom may be quite true, apart from the subjective feeling. It might seem that on such a day, the words I should choose would be those of felicitation, of exultation; and that the most fitting would be a commentary on the 118th Psalm, which this Sister is going to vow herself to say every day, of that beautiful song of praise, of *delight*, in being in the service of God. But I prefer to take another view.

When Father de la Colombière stayed at Paray-le-Monial, and helped the Blessed Margaret Mary for

a brief space before he was sent to England, at his last interview with her he said to her: "It seems to me that God asks you for all, and yet that He asks nothing." And they left their mark on all her life. And this is the thought that I want to develop to you to-day; in two points as I will put it, and I hope it may be a lesson not only to *her* to whom I speak it, but to you all, not for to-day only, but for a *long time*.

Well, then, first, God asks of you *all*. We are too apt sometimes to apply the words of the *Imitation*, and to say complacently, "I am nothing, I can do nothing," and be inactive, to find a certain complacency in the thought of our nothingness, and to rest there. Well, God may take a different view of it, and may say: "Yes, it's true that nothing you are, and nothing you can do, and you are *lazy besides*." Now, when we look at the world, and see the immense works that are done by men, simply by the use of their natural powers, the indomitable will, the energy that are brought to bear on them, the vast results obtained, we are lost in amazement. And why should God alone be deprived of the use of the powers which He has given us, the powers which belong to Him? He must have our diligent service, our unrepining service.

Secondly, He asks *nothing*. This is in some ways the same as the *first*. For when we have given God all, it is nothing in reality. This seeming paradox implies that when we have given all to God, not sparing human efforts and energy, we must let *Him* do His work in our soul, we must trust ourselves to Him, serving Him in simplicity (all is contained in

this word "simplicity," if only we realized its true meaning); not seeking to know and keep account of our progress, but trusting ourselves to Him, knowing our treasure is in safe hands. No more rummaging, then, nor consulting, nor spending the time of our prayer in examining our progress; but, letting God act, let us say, *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*, and go straight on and in the spirit of an Apostle, unite our pleadings with the pleadings of the Sacred Heart, lifting up our hands with His Pleading Hands.

When we remember for whom and to whom we are giving ourselves, after we have once made this holocaust, then all inward repining at the arrangements of Divine Providence is in reality a blasphemy. And so, she who now makes it, must make it her joy to carry out His will, find her joy in all that His will directs, because it is His will, because His will is accomplished, being the cheerful giver, whom God loves; and, whether in trial or in consolation, in adversity or in success, *always going forward in one straight line towards God* from this day forward, until the day *when He shall call her home.*

Notes of a Sermon preached at the Funeral of Sister Mary Winifrede, of the Sacred Heart, Poor Servant of the Mother of God, in Holy Cross Church.

St. Helens, 25th November, 1883.

"For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," Colossians iii. 3.

These words apply to us all. When we look at the remains of the dear little Sister who has passed away in the flower of her early womanhood, we feel

the necessity and the wisdom of despising the world, of turning our backs on what it offers to us, and keeping our hearts detached from all. It seems to me such a short time since I saw Sister Mary Winifrede, then almost a child, enter the novitiate. Once admitted, she only longed for the day on which she might pronounce her vows, and see the black veil cover her head, which would mark her as the consecrated Spouse of Jesus Christ. That hour came, and, as a formed Sister of the Institute, she has left this world for Heaven. We might have thought that a life so humble, so simple, so devoted, would have been spared longer; but God was watching Sister Mary Winifrede, and when He saw her ripe for Heaven, the fatal malady set in which terminated her earthly life. When we see her in her coffin, her Sisters kneeling round her, bound to her, not only by supernatural, but also natural affections; and her relations and friends, who feel her loss so deeply, we cannot but grieve with them. Still we have consolation, and that lies in the faith Sister Mary Winifrede herself possessed. Her death was calm, happy, and resigned; her only desire was, "to do whatever God wishes." She shows us in her life, that happy are those who follow the counsels and advice of our Lord.

We read in Holy Scripture of one who, having found one pearl of great price, sold all that he had and bought it. This she understood, conquering herself and doing good to others; she did the only thing life is worth living for. Some of us are wrapt up in the world, gathering together various kinds of

possessions. I ask you now, can he, who has been most fortunate in amassing these, take away one particle more than the poor Sister who has spent her life in voluntary poverty? All are not called to follow the counsels, but we are all obliged to live in purity according to our state, and to so restrain our will that we do not transgress the commandments. When we look at that coffin with its white pall, does not our heart rejoice? What does it say? Her dying life is over.

Now at last she has begun to live, received as the Spouse of the Lamb; she has been admitted to sing the song unknown to others than virgins, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

But let us not forget to pray for her soul. Pure and holy and devoted as was her life, she has passed and been judged by the light of Eternal Truth, and we know that the least degree of defilement unfits the soul for entering Heaven. She has done good to us! let us, in our turn, repay her by prayer,—the only thing it is in our power to do. But while we pray, and pray much for her, let us profit by her lessons of virtue, and let her example teach us to despise this world and all it contains.

May she rest in peace, Amen.

CONFERENCES TO NUNS.

On Confession.

In preparing for Confession, consider, is there anything wrong in my spiritual duties, or the duties of my state of life, in thought, word, or deed? Run over in your mind every day, since your last

Confession, and observe the chief faults; then pick out two or three of these faults in which there has been most deliberation, or carelessness, and negligence in their avoidance. Make an act of contrition, especially for one fault, and resolve to avoid that one. Contrition does not consist in tears and feelings (which, when God now and then pleases to send them, are graces, though not necessary), but in being able to say with sincerity—I wish I had not done it, because it offends my good Father, and, with His grace, I will avoid it in future. Take eight or ten minutes for preparation; and if you find afterwards in Confession that you feel special sorrow for any fault, tell it to your spiritual father. Every time you make an act of contrition at your two daily examinations, offer it for your next Confession. Make this a resolution for the rest of your life. Do not be wondering if you have told all, or worry if you have forgotten anything; if it be of consequence, mention it next time, and, if not, it does not matter. What is the Sacrament of Penance but a bath in which you are plunged and washed in the saving Blood of Christ,—a fountain bubbling up with the love of Jesus Christ,—a pool of Bethsaida, where you are healed of all your diseases and sicknesses,—a solemn tribunal, in which Christ has appointed His ministers to sit,—a place where you find a friend—a prudent director, who will stand by you to the end, and will be quite unbiassed in the advice he gives—a counsellor who will give good counsel—a judge who will never condemn? When Confession day comes,

put yourself in the presence of God, and make acts of love and contrition. The more you concentrate your attention on three or four faults, the sooner you will get rid of them. You will never get rid of your faults if you think too much of yourself. If you keep company with yourself, you will get wrapt up in your own misery. The source of comfort and light is Confession, if you only make a right use of it. Do you appreciate this Sacrament? Do you make a right use of it? If you only knew our good God, how much pain you would be spared! You do not know our dear Lord; if you did, instead of trembling and shaking, you would have great confidence and love; and thus, coming to this holy Sacrament in a right spirit, you would gain great benefit by it.

Conference on St. Joseph.

Now, let us see what St. Joseph will put into our minds to-day. I cannot take anything better for my text than the words spoken of him in the Mass of his Feast, where the Holy Ghost says, "He was a just man." We poor mortals, in our own smallness, and misery, and nothingness, do not know how to praise; we use many superlatives, and pile them one on another; but this is not the way with the Holy Spirit. Nothing comes up to His praise; and yet it is contained in a very few words, "A just man." What does this mean? First, St. Joseph was just to God, owning his Creator, and, unlike us, never doubting His love. This made him always tranquil and happy, and enabled him to go through

troubles and trials (none but a saint could go through unscathed) with joy. He was perfectly submissive to his Creator in all events, and joyful in them: he gave God His due, he owned Him to be his Creator, and to have a perfect right to do what He chose with Him.

In circumstances that we do not like, we say we submit, because we must: instead of which we should submit joyfully, knowing that what God does is for the best, and must be for our good. Now-a-days there is plenty of variety for nuns; and it is thought nothing of for one to be sent at a moment's notice from one place to another. How is she to preserve her peace and joy? By being just to God, owning that what He does is for the best, and for our good; by submitting with peace and tranquil joy, knowing that He loves us far better than we love ourselves, and that He has ordered all for our good. Then St. Joseph was just to his fellow-men. To worldlings, this would mean paying their bills; but, as in Religion we have not so many to pay, we must take it in another sense: we must be just to those around us; just to the Sisters of our Order, and of the Community to which we belong.

We owe each of them a debt of esteem, and respect, and religious affection. We will not dream of only giving our Sisters their due by not being rude to them, or doing anything to annoy them, or saying cutting words. Let us take our Blessed Lord's rule: "Do to others as we should like them to do to us." Our Lord said this, and He meant what He said; and He said neither more nor less. Let

us ask St. Joseph (who is the patron of the interior life) to let us understand what it is to be just in our thoughts of others, never thinking uncharitably of our Sisters, or judging them censoriously. Let us never say or do anything which can wound or cause pain, and let us do all we can to give pleasure.

We also owe others interior respect; St. Joseph could not help seeing the state of his Immaculate Spouse, and by law he was bound to denounce her; he did not, as yet, understand the mystery of the Divine Maternity, but yet he was not willing to judge her unfavourably, he did not wish to take away her reputation. Is it so with us? Do we not, on the contrary, find that even when we restrain ourselves from uttering words against others, still we find in our hearts the inclination to judge them, to think unkindly of them? We may not dare to say out what we think, but the willingness to do so is there all the same.

Here others cannot call us to account for our thoughts, for the interior life is not subject to the jurisdiction of men—but God sees all, and He is the judge; and we are told the saints quake at the rigour with which God judges unkind thoughts and judgments of others. But if, after years of loyally struggling to conquer this bad inclination in ourselves, we find it still exists, what can we do to eradicate it?

We come now to what is at the root of all justice. To be just to God, and just to others, we must first be just to ourselves. We must give ourselves our due! My God! what is my due? If for a moment

the thick veil was taken from our eyes and we saw ourselves as we really are,—nothing, and the many sins by which we have defiled our souls in the past, could we judge any one?

To be just to ourselves—in other words, to be humble,—is the secret to think and judge kindly of others. God sees all our thoughts, and when we come to be judged we shall find there is a special reward for those who have had kind thoughts of others.

Our Blessed Lord will say: "What you did to them you did to Me."

Let us then pray earnestly to St. Joseph to obtain us this grace.

Conference on Bearing Correction.

To bear correction is the simplest and most elementary disposition in religious life.

Without correction a religious house could have no claims to be a school of perfection. If a Religious can be corrected she is necessarily obedient. If a priest were to lead a worldly life and yet say his Mass daily, he would have graces enough to make him a saint, but he would make no use of them—so it will be with Religious who are not corrigible.

All true Religious must be able to bear a rebuke, whether deserved or not, with peace of soul. They should not expect to be able to see they are in fault, but take it in faith, and not look on it as an injury. Superiors are obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to give correction; but if they are clothed in armour with a steel backbone, they can hardly do so if they

know their subjects will sulk, be unfitted for their charges, seem as if they were injured; and so in the end the rebuke would prove quite useless.

A very great store of merits is accumulated by a fervent Community, and is divided between every one in it, in proportion to the amount of faith, hope, and charity in each heart. These merits hang over our heads, and do not get into our hearts, if they are badly disposed. A dislike of correction will show how we stand. We came to Religion to attain perfection; the *means* to this is *correction*. It cannot be had in the world, and so we come here for it; but, if we will not bear it, we are willing the end without willing the means. We ought never to excuse ourselves in the moment of correction; and Superiors are very guilty if they allow this, because they are bound to lead others to perfection; and yet, this would be diametrically against the means for it. To refuse correction is a most dangerous temptation; excuses follow, then anger, murmuring, bitterness, brooding; and especially if we think information has been given to Superiors.

Charity here differs from that of the world What would be detraction there, is here a duty and a help to perfection. We may not correct each other, and so must inform Superiors, that they may bestow that charity on our Sisters. The fervent soul stops the excuse, *feels* the struggle, may be; but knows the devil is in brooding, and cuts short the thoughts that would poison her soul, as drinking poison would the body. If she did the thing she thought best, and yet was corrected, she knows it is

good for her, submits cheerfully, ready again to fall, and to bear *ever-recurring failures*. She will become a saint.

Conference on Prudence (*Imitation*, 1. 4).

"Slow to hear, slow to speak, slow to resolve, slow to act." A chapter, not exactly for beginners, but which must be studied and practised before maturity can be attained. Reticence is a sign of maturity, which is gained by the slow process of self-repression. Whenever we have been hasty or rash, if we examine, we shall find we acted thus through a want of humility; we took away our only chance of being wise through not reflecting. And if we succeed after a hasty act, so much the worse, for, instead of making an act of contrition, which ought always to follow it, we plume ourselves on clear perception, prompt action, and the contrition is left out. If we do not take care, we shall be in Religion what the Holy Ghost describes to us, as the "child of a hundred years old." Such a one may pass through life without offence, pious and even useful; but she will never become a saint. *Slow to believe* what comes in through our ears, and slow to let it run out by our lips. A prudent listener is an admirable thing, worthy of study. To listen is a part of charity, but not to put faith in every word said. There seems to be a special interest in hearing anything which tears another's jacket. The evil may be very small, but listened to by giddy ears, retailed by a giddy tongue, so slight a beginning may have big results. In community life, peculiar

prudence is wanted, for we must talk to keep up recreation, and the subjects for amusement are limited. Without great care, we yield to the temptation of falling upon our neighbour's qualities. Imprudence comes from self-conceit; we do not allow ourselves time to think before acting. When we suffer from an injurious word, a detraction, a misunderstanding, how quick we are to speak! how few keep then perfectly well the rules of prudence!

St. Thomas Aquinas says prudence governs all the other virtues, and keeps them in proper bounds. Only the theological virtues may be exercised without measure. They say prudence is the virtue of Superiors; they command, we obey. But each one is superior of her own interior and will; and it is here especially that she must put in force the rules of prudence, which serious meditation has shown her the necessity of making. Prudence in a high degree is called maturity. From a mature life springs the earnestness, the intensity, the devotedness in God's service, which makes us fit instruments for God's glory. Thus, maturity brings forth sanctity.

Conference on Recreation.

Never let recreation pass without something pious having been said. Never allow slang, or worldly or irreligious topics. All should bring to it the same even temper, and on this account it is one of our chief opportunities of practising mortification and all virtues. Let there be no sulks. A person who does not speak at recreation is devoured by selfish.

ness. Cherish simplicity, it is so good. Look on the parlour as a foe. Never go there, unless obliged by duty or necessity. The spirit of the world, in which our Lord "has not anything," comes in there. He is so pleased, and is in "the midst of us" when we go to recreation in the spirit of joy, and there praise and revere our Sisters. There should be *no blame*, then, *except for sin*. A clever person who will prepare herself with subjects for recreation, and with tact get the dull ones to join, can raise the whole tone of this exercise. Piety should not be introduced at an unseasonable moment, but it may not be omitted. Our spiritual reading and the like afford enough topics, both pious and interesting. Our Lady at Cana is always our example at recreation. Ask her to take self-love out of our hearts. Then, can we not learn something from the mystery of her Visitation? No thought of self; directly after the *Ecce Ancilla Domini* we hear of her journey. She was always thinking of others. Then consider her meeting with St. Elizabeth: "When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary." What an example for Religious! How do we salute each other? With outward respect and inward reverence? Or are we rude, rough, brusque? If we would only study our Lady more. How she believed and trusted! Obedience speaks to us, and we will not believe. Look at her when the "Angel came unto her," and when that great mystery was wrought which is the epitome of all the Life of our Lord—the masterpiece of humility. The serpent said to Eve, that if she would eat of the tree "you shall be

as gods," she was deceived; but her fault was repaired by the second Eve, and through Mary it can be truly said of us, "*You shall be as gods.*" Oh, how this should make us love humiliation! Let us, when it comes, say, "This is good for me, and I will accept it in union with the Word made Flesh."

Oh, beloved Sisters, our good God will not crucify us with nails, but with little pins. Every day a few small pins, and you will conquer. Let us then be generous.

Conference on our Lord's Call.

Father Dignam was very fond of having English hymns sung in the chapel of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God. They would often bring tears to his eyes. On one occasion the first verse of the hymn was:—

Hark, the sound of the fight has gone forth,
And we must not tarry at home,
For our Lord from the south and the north
Hath commanded His soldiers to come.

Afterwards he spoke as follows:—

The hymn you have just sung is very beautiful, but there is one line in it that does not apply to us: "Hath *commanded* His soldiers to come."

God does not command, He invites. He loves volunteers; and let us all remember it is not only God's glory in our own souls that depends upon the answer we give, but as St. Francis Xavier gave the answer *yes*, and thousands of souls hung upon it;

and so in Martin Luther's case, alas! not a thousand, but many millions hung upon his answer, *I will not serve*. But, oh, don't let us say yes, as novices do sometimes who are very brave, because they are very inexperienced, but let us look back and see how heavily the Cross presses on poor flesh and blood, and then, let the answer be a reality, to choose those things which are against nature, and for the sake of Christ. He is anxiously looking into each heart for this, and every moment of the coming days is He as anxiously waiting for its fulfilment. He counts every thought, word, and deed accepted for His dear sake, and also in no less degree does He see all that could tend to His greater praise. His grace will never be wanting. Be content with His food, clothes, and lodging. See Him hanging on the Cross, out of cruel malice on the part of others; and think if you can ever say you are unfairly treated, seeing your Lord and God in this position for your sins; can you complain then, and make a misery of every little trifle, and say you are misunderstood? When you meet a little contradiction, say rather I misunderstood *myself*, for this is only my just due, and what is it when placed side by side with Him whom I am professing to follow in all things? You can never find yourself in any plight where you cannot see that our Lord suffered more.

NOTES OF SERMONS AND INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN IN PUBLIC CHURCHES.

Our Lord on the Cross.

In our sorrows, in those hours of agony that come to almost all of God's poor children on this earth, those hours in which no earthly friend is near to calm our fears, to whisper words of comfort in our ears, when even the dearest cannot understand our woe, when the night is dark, and we are tossed about on the stormy sea of the world, when even Heaven seems deaf to our prayers, let us look upon the Face of Jesus as He hangs on the Cross in His unutterable agony. If we are faithful to Him now, in our hour of trial, He will comfort us. As we gaze upon that Divine Face, and look upon His adorable Body upon the Cross, He will give us strength; and one day those Arms, that are now fastened to the wood with those terrible nails, will be extended to receive us, and clasp us to His wounded Sacred Heart. Those Eyes that are now blinded with Blood, will be opened to look upon us, the children of sorrow; those Eyes which are the light of Heaven, will look upon us with a look of unspeakable love; those Ears which have listened to the rude scoffs and jeers of a multitude thirsting for His Blood, will hear the faintest whisper of our love. Those Divine Lips which have cried out in dreadful agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" will speak to us in accents of the tenderest love; He will call us by our own name, and in that moment of ecstasy we shall forget the sorrow and desolation of our lives. Let us be glad to suffer now with Him. Should we care to pass our lives in pleasures and joy, when He was never "one hour without the anguish of His Passion"? Let us struggle on; and our prayers, our

works, and our sufferings will be united with His, who has prayed in anguish, worked in poverty and sorrow, suffered such bitter woe, and died at last of love.

A Whit Sunday Sermon.

When the fire which the Holy Ghost put into the hearts of the Apostles began to burn, they were different men. The concupiscence of their nature was conquered, and the fire which conquered was the love of God. We all, I suppose, have some experience of those two different kinds of fire—the fire of human passion and the fire of Divine Love. We know that each one of us has to spend his life in the contest—in the battle between these two fires, the works of every man and woman who has lived in this world, will be tried at the end by fire, and those who cannot stand the contest of that fire will perish. This is why St. Paul compares our works to pure gold and silver, works of God.

You all know very well how to keep a fire that is going out alight, and even make it burn brighter. This is what you have to do with the fire that is in your hearts. When you go to Confession and Holy Communion, the counsel that we can give you, the solicitations of the grace of God, all that is done by working on you can avail you nothing. It is not in *our* power, it is not in the power of God, since He has made you free, to make you good, nobody can force you to be good. It must be by your own action, by your own will, that you become good or bad. This is instructive because fire is a thing with which you are all familiar; and you know how it can be put out and suffocated in dust, or how it can be cultivated and made greater, hotter, and stronger. All that, then, is instructive for your souls.

With regard to the fire of human passion, do you want to keep it alive in your hearts? If you want to keep it

alive, go into the occasions of sin. Or, do you want as much as you can to put it out? If so, you can extinguish it. When we say, "My God, I am sorry that I have offended Thee," do we mean it, why do we go into the ways of sinning again? The man who makes an act of contrition here on a Saturday night, and on Sunday night is found in the same habits of sin, did he mean what he said?

If the fire that man nourishes in his heart in this world be the fire of concupiscence, the fire of human passion, it will burn eternally in the next world, in the fire that God has prepared for the wicked. If, on the other hand, he has his heart lighted with the fire of God's love, the fire that Christ came to cast upon the earth, the fire that the Holy Ghost cast upon the Apostles to-day, then he may look forward with confidence to a place in the mansions of eternal repose.

Three Reflections before making or renewing the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart.

I. What it is to our Lord.

The offering of a soul, to the utmost of its ability, the best return it is able to make for His Agony, His longing love. I want to offer Him the complete possession of myself, to make an act of perfect abandonment, of entire consecration, not only as if giving myself to Him by the closest vows of religion, but as if I gave my body to be burned to reserve *nothing*. Yet, all the while I know I am full of self; I am keeping much back; and if He sent His light into my soul, I should see it full of self, of shrinking from sacrifice, or pain. Still, according to my littleness, I want to give Him the best gift I can, and I am taking this pains because I want the offering to be the very best my littleness is capable of. How well our Lord receives this offering!

II. What it is to souls.

Do not have the false humility to imagine that it is a little offering you are going to make. It is the most perfect offering of which the human heart is capable. What you must be ashamed and confounded at is, that after so many years of consecration to the Sacred Heart, your zeal for souls is still so tepid and so unself-sacrificing. You must look at souls as God sees them, the one thing for which He created world, and Church, and Saints, for which He would give His life over and over again if it were needful. There can be no love of the Sacred Heart without zeal for souls. The morning oblation turns all you do or suffer into zeal, and its spirit must grow more and more into your life. Souls are saved far more by graces that come straight from God, than by the direct word of priest or apostle; and those graces would never have come, nor those souls have been saved, if others had not been leading lives of sacrifice. Our Lord must be our model, not only in what we do but in the disposition of heart with which we do it.

III. What it is to myself.

"The second is like unto it." (Mark xii. 31.) God then and my neighbour are *one*, and there is *one* opposite, self. Every moral act is an election, a preference of God to self, or of self to God. Every good moral act, therefore, is an act of self-renunciation; that is what I mean by a pure intention. It is *this* element in our actions which alone gives God glory. When you have convinced yourself of that, the meditation will be on "What the Apostleship does for ourselves."

See Conversation 5.—Conversations on the Apostleship of Prayer.

For a First Friday.

"*Hear, O My people; I will testify to thee; but My people heard not My voice, and Israel hearkened not to Me,*

so I let them go according to the desires of their hearts." These are the words of God; they tell us of the pain and disappointment God feels because His creatures will not love Him; and yet this love of God for *me* is the hardest lesson for our poor, weak, trembling hearts. We could never have dared even to imagine such a love, if He Himself had not revealed it to us. It is the cry of disappointment coming from the Heart of God, "My people heard not My voice, and I was obliged to let them go according to the desires of their hearts." Is not this the case with ninety-nine out of a hundred? They walk according to the desires of their own hearts; and it is only when the death sweat gathers over them that they begin to say, "Oh, I hope it is true that Jesus loves me." But *we have* learned the lesson before that time; we know that God loves us, and therefore we are come (but how few!) out of all the millions in the world to answer this cry of God's Heart, to do what He asks of us, to consecrate ourselves, all that we are, all that we have, to His love, to His service, and not forgetting our own misery, our own badness, our littleness, not in a pharisaical spirit, but in lowliness, in simplicity, we come to make Him as perfectly, as earnestly, as heartily as we can, an act of reparation, not only for our own sins, but for those of others.

Another First Friday.

THE SPIRIT OF THE THREE DEGREES OF THE APOSTLESHIP.

First Degree. Zeal. It is so easy to fulfil the obligation of this degree through routine. But when it is really meant, the morning offering grows upon one, it takes hold of one's mind. We begin by making our offering earnestly every morning, gradually it recurs to our thoughts during the day, when we are praying, working, or may be suffering, till at

last it insinuates itself everywhere—our very views become different—our Lord's interests become our own, to sorrow with the things that make Him sorrow, to rejoice in the things that make Him rejoice, we see the things around us in the light in which they regard Him. We care for His honour, His glory, the souls He died to save. We take an interest in everything that has to do with Him, in all those who love Him, who try to promote His glory. But St. Francis Xavier says that zeal is the virtue of the perfect—that is to say, that imperfect persons are likely to let their nature go along with their zeal; and thus it becomes rash, untimely, and does more harm than good. Yet none of us are perfect. What have we to do? To recognize it humbly; and this is the spirit of the—

Second Degree. Self-Knowledge and Humility. Let us take St. Francis Borgia for our model of humility,—him of whom the Church says, that he was a model of humility. When he felt his heart enkindled with zeal, he cried out to beg God that He would help him, for he had a wild beast by his side, and he feared it would get loose, and escape him. This he said of his nature. We must strive to know ourselves, to know the cause of our falls. Oftentimes we regret our faults, but there still remains an attachment to the thing for which we committed the fault. In the morning we offer our works, prayers, and sufferings with real earnestness, meaning what we say, and we wish to be consistent with ourselves, we desire our whole day to correspond to that morning offering; and yet, what does it come to? Is it not rash for me to offer my work, my prayers, my sufferings? My work,—why, it is offering idleness; my prayers,—so many wilful distractions;—my sufferings, so impatiently borne. Who am I who say, "I offer"? We are forced to our Lady's feet. I must try to make my offering perfect, I pray that I may be helped—Mother, Mother Mary, take pity on me, make my

offering *real*. So, then, this daily decade of the second degree is, as it were, an emblem of that humility and self-diffidence we ought to have in order that our zeal may not be rash.

The Spirit of the Third Degree is Union and Divine Charity. In Holy Communion our Lord feeds us with His own Flesh and Blood. He is so good, so humble, so patient, that He disdains not the lowly dwellings of our hearts. He will have us go to Him, He asks us to receive Him. Our Communions are joys to Him. He gives Himself to us to make reparation to Himself by Himself. He thanks us for our Communions more humbly than we thank Him for His best gifts.

Before the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Tuesday.

ON UNION WITH THE HEART OF JESUS IN THE MASS.

If we realized what the Son of God does in the Mass and what benefits even the most thoughtless who are present receive, who would be absent without necessity? The Son of God became Man, took our flesh and our nature, lived and died, nay, more, humbled Himself still further to look only like a piece of bread, for love of us, for love of you and me; and, you know, that still, though all glorious as He is in Heaven, He lives a true Man, with a true Man's Heart in the Tabernacle, that He is there ever pleading for us. But there is one half-hour in the twenty-four when He does more than this; when He comes down upon the altar to offer Himself as a victim for us, to sacrifice Himself over again for us, for He is both Priest and Host; to do what we ought to do, and do not. He is our Brother, and He loves us so intensely, that, not only

does He abide under the White Veil of the Sacred Species for each one of us, but He would come again from Heaven for each one of us, if he or she were the only person left in the world, and He would live His life over again, and renew His Passion for each one. And, during that half-hour of the Mass, when, perhaps, we are there full of distractions and foolishness, what is He doing? He is doing for us what we ought to be doing ourselves. He offers Himself to the Eternal Father.

Because we do not adore God as we ought, He renders Him the most perfect reverence and adoration a creature can give; because we are so cold and ungrateful, He offers Him the burning love and gratitude of His sinless human Heart; because we so easily forget our sins and have so little sorrow for them, He offers all the shame and sorrow He felt during His Passion, all the grief of His Sacred Heart at the sight of our sins. He says to His Father, "I offer all this for those present, for this one and for that one. I want Thee to accept it as if they had offered it to Thee." He knows each one of your wants, the needs of your soul, the suffering of your body, the temptations you are striving against, the troubles that depress you, the support you require in your daily life; and He pleads with His Father on your behalf for each and all of these. What ought you, then, to do? If you realized this, as you know it is, as your faith teaches it, would you ever miss a Mass of your own accord? and when present at Mass, could you fail to think of what He is doing for you on the altar, and to unite yourselves to Him, who is doing all for you? And, besides all the immense eternal good you could then gain for yourselves, you would give Him the sweetest consolation. Think of that, to be able to give sweet consolation to God!

Wednesday.

"Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened and I will refresh you."

We know so well that these words were spoken by the Eternal Truth, we believe them as of faith and more, yet how is it that our hearts are not full of love for Him, the Eternal Truth, who spoke them? We are blind, we cannot see. Could men's lives be what they are, would there be the difference we must acknowledge to exist between their faith and practice if they were not blind, if they could see that in the Tabernacle there is *One* dwelling for *them*, who loves each one with an undivided love, who is always thinking of *me*, waiting for my love, longing for *me* to visit Him, never weary of listening to my troubles, my sorrows, my pain, whatever it may be? And yet, let us think who said these words, and what they mean. "*Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*" He says, therefore, "I, the Eternal God, I, who can do all things, I will make all things right for you."

I am not speaking to those who can give all their time to prayer; that is not necessary. God knows you cannot do that; you have to work for your daily needs; but every one of you, whatever his business may be, can give his whole heart to love the Friend who longs so for our love. See whatever your trial may be; perhaps sickness, that heavy cross of sharp, long-continued sickness, when you feel yourself a burden and a drag, and yet long, above all, to be a help, perhaps the bread-winner of the family; see how this real cross changes its aspect, if we can but once realize, not only that God is here, but that in the Tabernacle there is an *infinite love* thinking of me, pitying me, feeling my pain, longing for the immense glory I can give Him if I only bear my pain with cheerful patience for love of Him.

Is your burden disgust, aversion, weariness? The heart of man is so formed that it is capable of intense devoted love, that it longs for love, will go to all extremes for love, —see how a mother lives only for her children. If your burden is loneliness, misunderstandings, coldness, unkindness, weariness of life,—and who amongst us does not know something of this?—here is the most loving Heart, a human Heart, but one that never misunderstands, that is never unkind, that never wearies of you, that longs for your love with an infinite love, able and willing, nay more, abiding there *only* in order to give you all you can desire, if you but seek Him for Himself alone. Will not the thought of this Friend, this true Lover, take all the weariness and loneliness out of your life?

Lastly, men are seeking after gain, they will work hard, how hard, for a little gain! they will deny themselves, they will suffer much, if only they may obtain a small gain; and here is the generous Master, the owner of infinite riches, who has prepared unspeakable rewards, if we will give ourselves to Him for His own sake, not for the sake of the rewards He has promised. Here is the true gain, the gain which is noble, while the seeking of all other gain is selfish and mean.

The Eve.

"*My Heart hath expected reproach and misery, and I looked for one that would grieve together with Me; but there was none, and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none.*"—Psalm lxviii. 21, 22.

Blind, indeed, are those who, from their own fault, *will* not know the love of the Sacred Heart. They are sick, and the remedy is before them, and they take it not; they are weary, and will not find rest; they are longing, striving for gain, and immense, inconceivable riches are in their grasp —they care nothing. Let us now try to realize the longing

of God for our love, longing even to bear agony to gain it. He has told us this Himself "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" God so longed for the love of His creatures, that He sent His only Son. Jesus came longing to suffer, from the first beat of His Sacred Heart, till the last moment of His life, always longing to suffer— why? that we —that some of us—might love Him. If we want to know the devotion of the Sacred Heart, we must study the Passion.

See the Agony in the Garden, the keen cutting pain of the kiss of Judas, the cold shiver at the denial of Peter, the dragging with cords, the blow on the Sacred Face, the spitting, the shame, the foul words; yet all this was *little* to the longing pain of God seeking man's love. The scourging, the crowning with thorns, the heavy carrying of the Cross on the poor, torn, bleeding shoulders. Yet even this is little, and why? Because there is still a greater proof of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Study the crucifix; see there what God rejoiced to suffer, if so only He might give us proof which we might believe of this longing for our love. He chose gladly, willingly, to suffer all this; it was less pain to Him to bear all this, than to bear the coldness of our hearts. Ponder on this if you desire to keep the feast of the Sacred Heart well.

Feast of the Sacred Heart.

"*My son, give Me thy heart.*"

We have thought of the loss of those who do not cherish the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and how the devotion helps us to make acts of perfect contrition. Think, for a moment, what it is to make an act of perfect contrition, to say: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for what I have

done, not because of my fear of the eternal fire, though I am afraid of that; but I am sorry because the sin pained Thee, who lovest me, because I have been ungrateful to Thee, for Thy love caused Thee to suffer for me." Such an act of perfect contrition washes away every stain from the soul, and makes it clean and white like the soul of a newly-baptized infant.

See how the devotion to the Sacred Heart produces this feeling of compassionate love and aids us to make such an act. God cares for no homage, save that of a sincere heart; He sees down into the soul's depths.

When our Lord asks us for *reparation*, He does not expect us to make it in our own strength. That would be of little value; but He says, "I know you are poor, weak, and foolish, so I come to you in Holy Communion; and when you have Me in your hearts, when the Blood of God is in your veins, then I will help you to make a grand act of reparation, an act great as the greatness of God Himself." See how this devotion helps us, also, to make acts of perfect virtue. A man who has grasped this is never depressed nor surprised when he is cold, distracted, full of vain and silly thoughts, even at Mass or Holy Communion. He says, "Lord, Thou knowest that I can do nothing, that I have no good thoughts, that I am poor and silly; but when Jesus is within me, I will make Thee a grand act of reparation;" and after Holy Communion, he says, "My God, I have nothing to offer Thee, I am full of folly; but I want to do what Jesus is doing now within me, I want to ask what He is asking, I want to offer Him to Thee;" and then he asks our Lord to offer him with Himself. When a man realizes this, he goes straight on, through rough and smooth, and through high and low, because he no longer depends on himself, but on the Sacred Heart. The reason why people are so easily discouraged when they

do not feel devotion, is because they trust in their own strength. Learn to trust in the Sacred Heart, and specially when It is within you at Holy Communion.

Holy Fear.

(1 *Thess.* ii. 1—7.)

St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to exhort them to put in practice the precepts he had taught them. He told them nothing new. The Church often asks us whether we have obeyed the laws of God, and this question fills our hearts with awe. But we must all put it to ourselves, not only those who have neglected their religion, for them indeed it is a terrible question, but also for those who are striving in the way of virtue. Our dear Lord Himself teaches us, that the neglect of His commandments comes from the fear of men, or of some temporal evil, and He tells us: *Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him.* We see persons, who are earnest in the ways of virtue, animated by this false fear of men, and because they have to associate with those of a different religion, or perhaps of different morals, they are ashamed of their standard, and for fear of being laughed at, or being called by this or that name, they disguise their principles, and try not even to seem to do their duty; let these ask themselves do they fear God rather than men? Do they while they fulfil their duties towards their fellow-men, forget their duties towards God? Let them answer that question as sincerely now as they will do when it is put to them in presence of the Infinite Power and Majesty of God. His scrutinizing eye sees all things. Each step you take to go here and there in your daily life, each step you took in coming to the church, and each you

will take in returning to your homes, brings you nearer to those Feet where at last you will lie prostrate with your brows in the dust—you will rise only to be judged. Then you will become aware, that His calm grave Eye penetrated the depths of your heart—nothing was concealed from Him, and you will then realize that He died for you, that if He could He would have died a thousand times for you, that it was *this* Love you spurned. We hear of the Jews preferring Barabbas, a known criminal, "to Jesus that is called Christ!" But you do the same when you disobey the laws of God through timidity, through cowardice, through human respect, through want of straightforwardness in your dealings; and this cowardice, this meanness, this baseness, will be changed for the contrary simply by having the fear of God in your hearts. Without it all goes wrong. Thus we see one man through fear of some mortification he must practise, some humiliation he must bear though he knows he would gain a bright crown of glory, and be made honourable in the eyes of men, yet neglect his duty to God; another perhaps will do the same for the sake of some pleasure which he cannot find courage to give up. Yet when we thus act, we know that all the joys of this world put together, are as nothing compared with that immortal crown which is the reward of a life of self-denial; we know earthly pleasures are but transient, so that if we give up eternal glory for them, we may apply to ourselves the words which the damned in Hell are always crying out: *We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. We fools*, they continually cry out, we derided the lives of the saints, their mortifications we despised, we contemned them: *Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.* Let us then beg of God to enrich us with the fear of Him which we find all the saints possessed. Thus we find St. Jerome,

because his heart was defiled by mixing with the world, retiring from it, and trembling as he knelt on the sand of the desert, while the sweat streamed from his brow; and after he had slept two hours, so strong was his fear of God, that he was obliged to rise once again to his knees. This fear does not prevent holy confidence, on the contrary we cannot have right confidence if we have not this fear. When you have seen a truly Christian family you see this picture yourselves; a father and mother rear their children (who like other children are full of wishes, desires, and vivacity) in the fear of God, and as long as all goes right, you see that bright confidence of the child towards its parent; but when it wishes to do wrong, then comes the fear of offending, the child says, "What will my father say?" This is what we ought to be with God, we must take these children for our models, for our Lord has said: *Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And He does not say this in severity, for He has given us sufficient proof by dying for us, that He wishes to call us to His arms and keep us there for all eternity. We know that He is infinite purity, infinite holiness, and therefore we must fear lest we should "cloud the brightness of His Face" towards us by offending Him. Let us then prepare for that day when we shall see Him face to face—it will not be in a crowd, but each one will be alone with Him, and His piercing eye will see through us. Oh, let us pray that we may not see a frown on that Face, but that it may shine brightly on us throughout eternity.

Joy in Suffering.

(*St. James* i. 2.)

The Apostle St. James tells those to whom he wrote, that if they are afflicted by divers temptations, they should

count it all joy, because of the faith that is in them. He appeals undoubtingly to their faith, and takes for granted that what they believe, they are ready to act upon in their lives. But he does not suppose that this can be done by their own natural strength—he knows how hard the lesson is to flesh and blood. Therefore he goes on to say that if any man "want wisdom" to bear his cross well, he must ask of God who giveth to all men abundantly. The cross sent to us comes from God, and it *must* therefore be a *best* and perfect gift. We have not often the wisdom to see this, but surely we can feel that it may, that it must be so. Prosperity is not always the best gift for us. Even as the sun rising to its noonday heat burns the grass, and causes the flower to fade away, so is the prosperous man in his ways. Prosperity may and often does bring out natural virtues—the generosity that will give rather than be pained by the sight of want—the kindness that will say a loving word rather than raise a frown or an altercation, may often be seen. But these are not the victories that truly glorify God, and deserve a crown in Heaven; and what other end have we than that? My children, one of the things we should be ashamed of is, that we seldom ask God in a fervent prayer for the *wisdom* we need to bear our cross well. And what sight is more miserable than that of a soul loaded and borne down to the earth with the cross which was sent to raise it to Heaven? There are two sorts of crosses which we have to bear. Those which come to us immediately from God, and those which come to us (always from God) but through men. Now the first of these crosses we usually bear with dejection, we are overborne by them, and because it is *God* who tries us we cannot resist. Yet it is always true that: "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." God, long before He created us, loved us with the most special and the tenderest love. Each one of us, mind, can put his

hand on his breast, and say that is true for *me*. The tenderness of a mother watching over her sick child, will guard it from even a breath that might harm it; now in our good God there is infinitely more than the care of father, mother, and friends combined, and if the losing *one hair* of one's head were really a harm to us, He would not permit it to fall. Then if we have faith let us look up bravely, and *count it all joy*, according to that energetic expression of the Apostle. What is more sad than to see a soul misusing the graces sent from God for her sanctification, and for His glory? Never a frank acceptance of God's will, but a sinking down under the weight of the burden laid upon the soul, only that it might spring forth to life eternal; and the soul crushed by the weight, not of the cross, but of its own selfish repining and imaginings. The other kind of crosses come to us from men, and these are generally met with anger; the Apostle tells us that we should be "slow to speak, slow to anger." The pain given us by our fellow-man is a thing permitted by God, and shall we stand looking at the creature through whom the cross comes, instead of looking to Him who sent it? The anger to which we give way makes us forget all that we should remember, and remember what we should long ago have forgotten; it makes us imagine injuries where none were intended, and gives exaggerated proportions to what really exists, and when in our calmer reason we look back upon the words we have spoken, we shall see that we have gained nothing and lost much, for the *anger of men worketh not the justice of God.*

Now the best fruit of all is contained in this little word: *If a man lack wisdom let him ask it and it shall be given to him abundantly.*

Ask then, my dear children, for that gift, in order that you may have the grace to suffer well; it will enable you to

live calmly, worthily, and happily here, and win for you the fruit which our Lord expects in eternal glory.

Peace.

St. John xx. 21.

He said therefore unto them again: Peace be to you. The Gospel tells us that our Lord appeared twice to His Apostles after His Resurrection, and said three times, *Peace be to you.*

He who never said a word in vain, said this three times, and the thought immediately presents itself, how dear peace must be to the Sacred Heart; and then we naturally remember the time when He said it before; on the occasion when He shed tears over Jerusalem, He wished that it might have peace. *If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace.* What is peace? It is identical with happiness; it is repose; and when our Lord wished peace to His Apostles, He was not speaking of Heaven He desired it for them then and there; this shows us that we can all enjoy repose here on earth, and the way to obtain it is by acknowledging and accepting the law of God, subjecting ourselves to that. We wish to be happy, but we do not adopt the means. As the *Imitation* says: "You desire peace; but about those things which secure peace you are not solicitous." We must be at peace with God, our neighbour, and our own souls. St. Austin says that our peace with God must be a peace well ordered, not a false peace. Nothing on earth is so deplorable (perhaps you have never seen it) as a wicked man who appears to be in peace, has great worldly possessions, and seems happy in their possession. But this appearance of peace is because he has no wish to become better, his heart is seared and hardened; the finger of God does not press on it, and remorse is stifled, and there is no surer sign of

a futurity of eternal woe; it is a most ghastly imitation of peace. But happily, as I said, this would not be easily found among you: when you find that your peace with God has been ruptured, the only way for you to forget it for a time is by burying yourselves in some engrossing external occupation, some object of interest, so as to forget all about eternity for awhile; but your heart is filled with remorse for having offended God, and you wish for peace with Him again. Peace with our neighbours is no less necessary. It is difficult, but the way to make it easy is to look into yourselves, and you will see that the fault all lies with you, not with your neighbour, and if you constantly keep the memory of your own faults, you will not treat so harshly those who are in reach of your criticism. Our Lord has shown His dislike of this harshness towards others; when a flagrant criminal was brought before Him by a whole host of Pharisees, He refused to listen to them. He wrote something for each which each one only could understand, and dispersed them all, saying: *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* To quote again the *Imitation*, it says: "The proud man is always indignant." This shows that it is your sin, your pride which makes you blame others. Peace with God and our neighbour is called concord, and St. Austin says it must be a right concord. There may be a wrong concord, a peace of an hour, or of a short time, even in a den of thieves, when all wish for the same end, though it be a bad one; but this is easily destroyed when they change their end or when the end is accomplished; this is not right concord, which is constant. If we have however the fear of God in our hearts, and the desire of true peace with God and our neighbour, we should also possess peace with ourselves, in our own hearts, which is, after all, the essence of peace. St. Thomas says that peace with ourselves does not consist

in the satiety of the appetites and desires of our hearts and souls, but in overcoming them. If we satisfy all these desires and appetites, we shall not have true peace, but only its appearance, even if we have all the goods of this world.

When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace. How often do we see this around us. A man who possesses worldly goods seems happy and at peace, because he has all he wishes for which in this world's wisdom he loves; *But if a stronger than he come upon him, and overcome him, he will take away all his armour, wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils.* So with such a man, when the cross comes, when temptations assail him, he has not inward peace, though others cannot see it. Well, then, if you would have true peace, which is possible even in this world (which the Holy Spirit has called a warfare), seek it in the war, in the struggle, there you will find it, not in the gratification of yourselves. I wish I could put this before you more clearly, I wish I could illustrate it from the lives of each one of you; but however imperfectly my thought may have been explained, I hope you understand this much: that you must not leave the church to-day without resolving to overcome your principal fault, that evil seed from which all the others spring, and all the instructions you have heard will have taught you that the way to set your desires at peace is not by gratifying but by overcoming them; and remember when our Lord appears among you, as He did among the Apostles, "the doors being closed," He wishes you the same blessing as He wished the Apostles—the blessing of peace, and those who are wise will answer by the words the Church puts into your mouths, "Give us peace." For He desires to give you this peace, this happiness, when He comes down from Heaven into the hands of the priest standing at the altar. You ought to desire it even for your

temporal interests; taking it in the most material point of view, without considering the truest, highest, sublimest reason for desiring it, namely, that our Lord may not shed tears over you, as He did over Jerusalem, you cannot be happy if you go on desiring to pass the limits where God has placed His foot and said, *Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.*

In conclusion let us say: O my God, give me peace, do not let me be disturbed as hitherto I have been by anger, unkind thoughts, self-seeking, and neglect of Thee; O my God, give me peace, let me appreciate true peace beyond all earthly things, give me the desire to sacrifice everything rather than lose it. Give me that peace which is the best and only assurance I can have in this life of obtaining in the next that peace which is to last for ever.

Redeeming the Time.

(*Ephesians* v. 1—20.)

In one of St. Paul's little sermons to his disciples at Ephesus, the beginning of the fifth chapter, he gives them a picture of their past lives. Let us apply this picture to ourselves. He says that their lives have been lives of self-seeking,—does not that come home to some of you? St. Paul then, says that this life of self-seeking was either seeking for money or seeking for pleasure. Whenever there is selfishness in the heart, it takes one of these two forms. Next the Apostle speaks of all those idle, useless words which accompany this disposition, and which are worthy of judgment—for when corruption is in the heart it comes forth and shows itself in words. When the love of money is in the heart the words betray that love, and how much more is not this the case with regard to pleasure. If we seek for pleasure we use frivolous words, and if avarice is in the heart our words are full of anger against our

brother, for bad affections are sure to lead to bad hatreds. St. Paul knew well the power and subtlety of the persuasion of the world; therefore he said: *Let no man deceive you.* The world to-day offers us very easy maxims—a way of being a model of propriety in the exterior, while the interior is a mass of corruption. A man who is bent on gaining money goes into the world:—do not its counsels, its maxims, its very atmosphere encourage him in his avarice? He goes among his kindred. They tell him he must gain money—honestly, of course, if he can, but he must get it; and this is still more the case with regard to pleasure. The world finds excuses to palliate all those faults that we commit, but *Let no man deceive you*, says St. Paul. God has given us a law, and when we come face to face with Him, our lives will be compared step by step, act by act, word by word, with this law, and according to their conformity or divergence will be pronounced that word which will decide our eternal happiness or condemnation. Not according to the soothing maxims of the world shall we be judged. St. Paul must have known well the hearts of his disciples—it was as if with one master stroke he had drawn a perfect picture. He knew well that they had been pagans, and that now, when they had left their life of self-seeking, by the force of an interior conviction of the necessity of this step, he knew that sadness, repining, discontent, would come to their hearts, that they would look back with regret on the life of sinful pleasure which they had quitted. Therefore he told them not to sit down thus repining. Does not this at least come home to some of us? Do you not sit down, and think over all your little miseries, weigh your crosses, and even arraign God for laying them upon you, without seeing what deep and miserable ingratitude it is to repine, when God is pouring on you graces, which it cost Him His life-blood to

grant you. The Holy Spirit puts a world of meaning in every word He says, and He knew that St. Paul was speaking to people who were between two lives, one which they had left, the other which they were afraid to enter. It is the same with us. When we leave a life of pleasure we bring nothing with us, our hearts are empty, and very little inclined to be filled with God's grace, and we feel tempted to repine. It was for this St. Paul told them to rise above their thoughts, to go on—but to walk with caution. Not to continue in the foolish, heedless way in which they had walked. We, too, must gird ourselves like men for the fight, and walk with caution. He who thinks he can lead a life of purity, such as the Church wants from us, and yet lead a careless one, mingling freely in the temptations of the world, is foolish indeed. We cannot float to Heaven. We must then replace repining by an earnest sense of the seriousness of that for which we fight, and the thought that the crown is eternal. We must, as St. Paul says in another place, serve God with *fear and trembling*. Then St. Paul pronounces those very awful words, which none of us can utter in the silence of our own hearts, without being struck with their solemn significance for us; *redeeming the time*. All of us have time to redeem. Some of you are perhaps very young; but the youngest of us who can think, will see that in the short space of years which has been his, while yet as it were on the threshold of life, he has time to redeem. And if boys and girls looking back on the past, find that there are days to be wept over, acts done to be undone, and to be washed away by true repentance, how much more have not we who have reached a maturer age, who have borne the burden—and, dear brethren, it is a sullying burden—of the world, how much more have we not need of *redeeming the time*. And those whose hair is blanched, and whose cheek is wrinkled, must indeed make

haste to redeem time during the years or days which remain to them, and those who are young, may not think themselves secure, for death is capricious, so to speak, in the choice of its victims; it does not wait for age, but often takes those who are in their prime. How, then, must we redeem time? First, indeed, by penance, second by labour, and third by almsgiving. Every man going on this journey which we call life, has time to redeem. The ways are bad, the clouds are hanging overhead, and the rain falls on him, but he must go on through this darkness, and in spite of these obstacles. He must not sit down on the roadside, for the night will come on; he must go forward, he has time to redeem. If this were all we had to look at, the stoutest heart would be discouraged. But we must think of the promise our Lord has made to us all, of the end to which we are tending, and of those words of St. Paul, that *the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*, when we reach that end. If we have before our eyes this bright goal, and the Sacred Heart which is to be our pillow at the end, then we shall be indeed cowards if we are discouraged or faint on the way. But let us gird ourselves, and walk bravely on with this bright goal before us, looking on the Cross which is at the same time our model, and the sign of that love which is waiting for us, with Arms and Heart open to receive us; and we shall go forward not with our own strength, but with angels guarding our every step, until we reach the goal, of which our Lord speaks when He says: *Be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold, your reward is great in Heaven.*

Feast of St. Joseph.

St. Joseph then, dear brethren in Jesus Christ, the great saint and patriarch, the spouse of Mary, the foster-father of Jesus, is as the Church tells us, the model for all states of life; higher in sanctity than the Apostles, he is yet the model of domestic life. But all the life of St. Joseph teaches us but one lesson: doing the ordinary duties of life, bearing the crosses that are sent to us, in dear union with our Lord. It teaches us a lesson of obscurity, but of obscurity in contentment and peace. You may all say, "This is no lesson for us, we are obscure and private individuals of whom the world never dreams of talking." But is there none of that craving desire of being noticed and admired? If so, your obscurity is not peace. If the Scripture told us before St. Joseph came into the world: *All the glory of the king's daughter is from within*—the beauty of the heart—the interior life of St. Joseph repeats this illustration, and it is a figure of the obscurity yet more sublime, yet more beautiful, of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. And when the cross came to St. Joseph, when the sharp anxiety and perplexity concerning his Immaculate Spouse fell upon him, he bore his cross patiently, till the Angel whispered in his ear the welcome message: *That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost, and she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name Jesus.* God wished to pour down on St. Joseph the treasures of His grace, and therefore He sent him this cross, to prepare him for those great riches, great treasures. So it is with us, when God wishes to give us some precious grace, some special gift, He sends His cross first to purify our hearts, and whoever we may be, whether we succeed in all our ambitions, or whether by the disposition of Provi

dence our plans are frustrated at the very moment when we thought to gain our end, all alike we must be content to bear the cross when it comes, not without stoicism, not with bravado, but with quiet humble patience like St. Joseph; and we may be sure the bright crown is waiting for us above. Is it possible to imagine a cross more painful, more agonizing, than that which St. Joseph had to bear? But after he had borne it with a patience that showed his worth, then came the crown, and what a crown! God was given to him for a Son, and he was never again separated from Him except during the short but painful cross he had to bear, when he lost Him in the Temple. St. Joseph had the happiness to see our Lord always beside him in human form, working at the same hard drudgery; they were always together. But you may also enjoy a happy union with our Lord in all your actions, by living an interior life. Remember, then, that Jesus is with you, that at the first little cry of pain for having offended Him, He has forgiven you, and pray that you may obtain, like St. Joseph, the grace of dying in His Sacred Arms, and in the hour of death those Arms which are always open to you, will close round you. Thus will you find that those things which before were hard will become easy; that which was tasteless will become sweet, and that which before seemed to you profitless will become the one thing which will render your life happy, and bring you through death to a happy eternity.

Instructions for the Young.

Prayer (1).

God gives to all of us many natural gifts. Some have more, some less—but grace is not like any of these—no one can see grace, and if you lose it the natural gifts will remain. But God destined you for something much higher, for a dignity far greater, namely, being with Him for all eternity. You cannot however be raised to this dignity without grace, hence you see how you ought to value it. It is a free gift of God, but which He is certain to give to you, if you will use the means of obtaining grace, though, as I told you, you cannot claim it because it is His free bounty. These means are prayer and the holy sacraments. God refuses nothing to those who pray well; for He said: *Ask and it shall be given you.* Hence you see how badly you must have prayed when you were not heard. But prayer does not consist in repeating a lot of words you are not thinking about, it is "the raising of your hearts and minds to God;" consequently, if you say two words by which you really raise your hearts to God, it will profit you more than if you read through half a prayer-book. So many of you when you go to bed at night, or get up in the morning, find it is very late. "Oh dear me," you say, "I suppose I must say my prayers." Down you fall on your knees and begin "*Our Father who art in Heaven*" as fast as you can, so that even the most beautiful words our Lord could invent, profit you nothing, on account of the way you say them. But in the morning try and think: I shall meet with many temptations during the day, and if God does not help me by His grace, before night I shall often fall. Before kneel-

ing down to pray, think while standing up what it is you are going to do, then begin your prayer. I don't know if I have ever told you this story. One day some of the first Fathers of the Society were travelling on mules to a certain town; the man to whom the mules belonged went with them. As soon as they arrived at the inn and got into the dining-room, instead of beginning to order what they wanted, the mule driver was astonished to see them all go down on their knees; he wished to know what men who seemed so holy were saying, but as he could not find this out, he went into a corner, knelt down too and said: "O Lord, I wish to tell you whatever these holy men are telling you: give me too, whatever they ask for themselves." And it was shown by God to one of the Fathers, that the poor man was receiving extraordinary graces, because, though he was an ignorant man who could not even read, he had said this simple short prayer with all his heart. Well then as the practical fruit of all this, try and pray well. The Church exhorts us to pray morning and evening; in the morning let us pray that God will be with us, guard us and help us through the day; at night let us examine and see if we have offended Him, ask His pardon and protection during the night; let our prayers be heart to heart with Him. You know how you would be punished by any one you respected very much, if you had told them a long yarn you had learnt by heart, and they found out that you did not know what you were saying. But this is what you do to Almighty God when you do not pray well. Keep in a state of grace by God's help, for if you continue in a state of mortal sin, it is impossible to please God, who will not receive favours from His enemy. Pray then for His grace, that it may be with you, and keep you from harm. I have told you before how the saints have said, that the sheep on our Lord's right hand at Judgment will be those who prayed, and the goats on the left those who did not pray.

Prayer (2).

In the last instruction, I tried to show you that prayer consisted not in the words you say, but in the thoughts that are in the heart. The Catechism asks which is the best of all prayers? and the answer says: the *Our Father*, because our Lord Himself made it. When He was in the midst of His Apostles, they came and asked Him how they ought to pray, and He then said those words which form the little prayer called the "Our Father," and if our Lord made it, surely there must be something in every word which may do us good. The first words He said when the Apostles asked Him, were "Our Father." He makes use of this word "Father," rather than all the other names by which we designate God in Heaven. He does not say "God, Judge." He does not tell us to say every day, "God is my Judge, who will one day condemn me to Hell, or give me my place in Heaven." This would if you said it every day fill your hearts with fear, which would certainly be very useful. But this is not what our Lord taught us to say. God is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; all these are contained in the word Father, Creator. He drew us out of absolute nothingness, so that if we could understand it, we should see that the word Creator is after all the one that indicates our closest tie with God, yet we cannot understand it. But God is not only your Creator, He is your Preserver, you may find it difficult to believe you can do nothing without His help; you feel pretty strong on your legs, you can go about, too much sometimes I am afraid, but it is God who directs the winds that you may breathe, who takes care that you have your food, who is always thinking of you; if He ceased to sustain us we should all fall into nothingness. You think especially when

you have sinned, that He is willing to punish you; but He is much more willing to forgive you, and this is why our Lord tells us to say "Father." He wishes to bring us all around Him in Heaven. Excellent fathers have sometimes very bad sons however, and they go on forgiving them once, twice, three, seven, ten times, till at last kindness will do no longer, and they are obliged to turn them out. But every good father is broken-hearted if he has to shut his door against his own son. So it is with God. He forgives us although we go on offending Him every day, and He wishes to bring us to Heaven, and it grieves Him if He has to send us away. If you saw a child in its mother's arms, beating her, at the same time that it drew its nourishment from her, you would dislike the sight, but it is the truest image of what we do with Almighty God; while He is giving us His graces, we go on doing all in our power to offend Him. If a father was toiling all day, not so much for himself as for his children, to gain them the bread which they eat at night, and they plotted against him all the time, he would be grieved at their ingratitude; yet this is what you do with God, and still He is willing to forgive you. This is why He has taught us the Parable of the Prodigal Son; he was a very bad son, and behaved as badly as he could, but still when he returned his father went out to meet him, and even before he had said, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee*, the poor old father had thrown his arms round his neck and forgiven him. This is how our Lord pictures Himself to us, showing us that confidence is right, and despondency is wrong, for when we are the children of God, when we call God our Father, when our Lord Himself has taught us to call Him Father, He has for us all the affections of a father, He is always taking care of us. But let us go still further, and let us see how when nothing else could avail He came down from

Heaven to be our Redeemer, and died to save us; and after that God Himself could do no more. He has given us angels to take care of us, and this is another proof of His pastoral care which was so beautifully referred to this morning,[1] and these angels take care of us as they did of St. Peter; he was lying there in prison, in chains, in darkness, and asleep. The first thing the Angel did when he entered the prison, was to fill it with light, his body was so radiant that it immediately lit up the whole room. The next thing was to strike St. Peter on the side, and say, *Arise, quickly;* then he made the chains drop off St. Peter's hands, and guided him to the place where he was to go. Well, your Angel Guardians will do as much for you, only sometimes you won't let them. God sent His Angel to St. Peter, not only to show the care He takes of the Pope, for St. Peter was the first Pope (and though our present Holy Father is in prison, God can send His Angel to deliver him as He did to St. Peter), but He did this not only to show the special care which He takes of the Head of the Church, but also to show the care which your Guardian Angel takes of you. But when the Angel comes and strikes you on the side as he did to St. Peter, and tells you to get up, you are lazy and prefer lying still. Now what would have happened to St. Peter if he had not arisen? Very likely the Angel would have gone away again. Sometimes when you arise in the morning you feel very sad; the devil always tries to get the first thought, and he puts a gloomy feeling into your hearts. You get out of bed, and begin thinking how wretched everything is; but it ought to be quite sufficient to say the two first words of the "Our Father" or even the word "Father" to restore you to cheerfulness. Why should you be miserable? Are you poor? Christ Himself was poor as long as He remained in this life; surely there can

[1] Acts xii. 6, 7.

be nothing in that to make you miserable. Are you in disgrace? Well you deserve it, or if you do not, it will never do you any harm to be in disgrace, unless you are in disgrace with God, and even then you need not be gloomy, if you are resolved to ask His pardon for it, for the minute you say, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee*, He will forgive you, and not only forgive you, but restore you to your place among His children; He will put the ring on your hand, and even kill the fatted calf and rejoice in your return to Him; and our Lord has taken the trouble to compose a prayer for you which reminds you of this, as soon as you have said even the first two words "Our Father." So that you see to be afraid of God in such a way as to doubt of His love for you, is folly: remember always that you have a Father above, who is guarding you, guiding you, leading you to Heaven, and taking care of you all through your life.

Prayer (3).

Last Sunday I spoke to you about the first words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father." To-day we will dwell on the word *Our*. The word *Father* is quite enough to think about for a week. As I told you, our Lord in His divine wisdom made this prayer so short that all could learn it, yet He made every word full of meaning and matter for thought. We say "*Our* Father," so that if we all have one Father we must all be brothers, therefore we must love each other as brothers, and pray for each other. One of the things which mark the Catholic Church is, that she makes all equal, rich and poor, weak and strong, young and old. When you come up to Communion, you all come together regardless of rank, riches, beauty, appearance. So we are before God. He does not love us because of our riches or

beauty, but because we are His children. Our Lord after His Resurrection appeared to St. Mary Magdalen and said: *Go tell My brethren*—My brothers—*that they go into Galilee there they shall see Me.*

This teaches us not only that we are all brothers, but also that after His Resurrection and now that He is in Heaven, our Lord retains the same relationship with us as when He was on earth. He is still our Brother, the same as when He suffered for us. In Heaven he is still Man. You may think that this is not important to know, but it is. There are many who do not understand it at all, and these would be very much shocked if you told them that our Lord in Heaven has still a human body as when on earth. But it is so; He has those same kind Eyes that looked with so much compassion on sinners, those same Hands that worked so many miracles, that same Heart which broke with love for us on the Cross, and if we know this, it is much easier to love Him. It is far easier to love Him, when we think that He has still a human Heart and feelings, than if we thought that He was now a distant invisible Spirit, whom we could not understand. *Go tell My brethren*, He said. He did not say, "Go tell those who were once My brethren," and He said it when He was risen glorious and ready for Heaven, and it therefore holds good now that He is in Heaven. This one little word *Our*, the first in the Lord's Prayer in English, reminds us of all this, and also that we must pray for others. And I tell you this (I do not know if you understand much about desolation), but those who experience desolation and dryness in prayer, would find it much better if they prayed a little more for others, instead of making themselves miserable, and trying to persuade themselves that God does not love them, as many are so fond of doing. It would be much better to think a little more about the necessities of others, instead

of thinking so much about your own. Think of those who are in temptation, those who are wretched on sick-beds, those who are in their agony, and especially the souls in Purgatory. One of the spiritual works of mercy is to pray for the living and the dead, and if our Lord has promised that a cup of cold water given in His Name should not lose its reward, surely those who pray constantly for their neighbours, for the suffering on earth, and the souls in Purgatory, will not be without their reward. St. Chrysostom, I think it was, speaking to his children of Constantinople some fourteen hundred years ago, said: "To pray for ourselves comes from nature, but to pray for others is the grace of charity." This is very true; it is natural to pray for yourselves, you feel the want of it, you see your necessities. But it does not come so natural to you to pray for others; but the first two words of the "Our Father" must remind you of it by showing you that we are all equal before God, we are all children in His sight. For those who are accustomed to flatter themselves that they are better than their neighbours, *Our Father* ought to be quite sufficient to remind them that those whom they despise are their brothers. If everyone began the day with these words, they would never act so arrogantly, so cruelly or so unjustly, and the wicked would be quite changed if they thought of *Our Father.*

Prayer (4).

Last time we spoke about the words *Our Father*, now let us go on to the words *who art in Heaven.* There was not one word put in the *Our Father* by our Lord which was useless, therefore the words "who art in Heaven" were not put in without reason; it is to inspire us with awe, for God sees us in the dark as well as in the daylight. God is everywhere, in Heaven, on earth, and even in Hell, but to

the lost souls it is one of their greatest tortures to feel that their justly irritated God is there. A prophet once said these words: *If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there, if I descend into Hell Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: Even there also shall Thy Hand lead me and Thy right Hand shall hold me.* This is the poetical expression he uses to say that God is everywhere. I will tell you a story of two of the first Fathers of the Society.

They were sent to Lisbon when Portugal was one of the most powerful kingdoms of Europe, and the Court one of the most profligate and splendid. The courtiers were very profligate, and the King, who was very good, wrote to the Pope and asked him to send two Jesuits, which he did, and when they arrived you may be sure they were very closely watched, for the courtiers said: "They have very long grave faces now, but we shall soon find out they are as bad as everyone else." But they examined their conduct, and found they were always as austere as before they came to the Court. So they asked them: "How is it you manage to keep good amongst us all?" "We wear," replied the priests, "a certain plant under our habit." "Oh, indeed, we should like to have it; what is it called?" "It is called *Timor Domini*." "But we do not know that plant." "No," replied the priests, "and that is why you lead such bad lives." This right fear of God does not take away our confidence in Him; on the contrary, those who have *Timor Domini* are generally those who have great confidence.

We must ask with confidence when we pray, but when God sees it is not good for us, we do not always get exactly what we ask for, especially in temporal things. When you say: *Give us this day our daily bread* (now bread is a temporal thing), we do not only ask for bread, but many

other nice things such as money, jewels, and carriages. Therefore, let us ask with confidence for all we want, even temporal things, but above all let us ask in this world for things that will make us happy hereafter.

Life everlasting.

Life everlasting, as the Catechism tells us, does not only mean that the good will live for ever in Heaven, but that the wicked will live and be punished for ever. This is just the last thing in the Creed, not only because it is the last in the history of our souls, but also because it ought to make the most lasting impression on us. You ought, when you have finished the Creed, to think of the last words you have said, which are life everlasting. This thought will very often keep you from sinning. Although you are still young, you must remember this truth just the same as grown up people, and you know that little children often do die, and if you have been in the habit of telling lies, of stealing, or anything else, you will be punished for it, just the same as if you had lived to be very old. See the martyrs, men, women, and even children. St. Pancratius was only twelve years old, St. Agnes only fourteen, and what induced them to stand calmly in the midst of the flames? It was the thought that the torments of this life can only last a very short time, while the reward is eternal. This eternal life is called by many different names in the Gospels: the Kingdom of God, Heaven, Paradise, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem; but none of them can give us an idea of what this life really is, though they show us sufficiently that it is worth giving up for it the pleasures of this life. When you see anything that looks very nice, whether it be a sixpence or a pudding, you say, "Oh, that looks very nice." Then your Angel Guardian says, "But

it is not yours, you must not touch it." "But it looks nice," you say, and if you have not the thought of eternity before you, what is to prevent your taking it? I do not know whether I have told you the story of one of the American poets, Longfellow I think it was. Well his parents were always astonished at the straightforwardness of his ways. One day they were making something in the house, about which I suppose you have never heard, jam! Everybody was busy with it, large cauldrons of boiling jam were put on the fire, and then it was laid out in the store-room to cool, before it was stored away for the year. Well, everybody was so busy, that the young gentleman did not get quite so much attention as usual; he was wondering what it was all about, and by following first one person and then another, he at last found himself in the store-room with the jam. The sight of it so fascinated him that he stood with his eyes fixed on it, till at last he was forgotten; they left the room and locked the door, and Harry was left alone with the jam. By-and-bye they began to wonder what had become of him, and someone said, "He is in the cupboard." Every one of course asked, "And what has become of the jam?" They hurried to the room, opened the door, and there they found him with his little hands clasped tightly behind him: he had got as far as he could from the jam, and there he sat with his back pressed against the wall, saying over and over again, "It does not belong to Harry; he must not touch it," as fast as his little tongue would go, arguing this way with himself. This may seem to you a stupid little story, but it shows what even little children are capable of, if they think of eternity. Think of the happiness you will feel at that moment, which as I am so fond of telling you, is sure to come for each of you, when you will be at the Feet of your Judge, if you have had the thought of it often before you now; of course I am not

talking of the misery of that moment if you see a frown on His Brow, and are driven from Him for all eternity; then that moment would be a time of misery to you. If you can picture *that* to yourself, you can also picture the infinite bliss of the moment when your Guardian Angel leads you from the Feet of your Judge to the feet of our Lady in Heaven; then when you are safe, safe for ever in the arms of God, how happy you will be to find yourselves thus secure. If everyone were deeply impressed with the thought of eternity, they would not be able to go to bed at night if they knew they were not fit to appear before God, that if they died they would not have everlasting life, for we none of us know when we may die; perhaps some of you may be dead before this time next week. Next Sunday many who are now in life and health will be in eternity; if everyone thought well of this, it would be impossible for them to go to bed after having committed a mortal sin. We should have people knocking at the presbytery door in the middle of the night, calling out, "Father, come down, I want to go to confession," and if we told them it was not the time, to come on Saturday at three o'clock, "Oh, but I can't wait till Saturday at three o'clock," they would say, "I may not live till then." In fact we should have no peace. But another thing is that you would commit far fewer sins. If after a long life of adventures and vicissitudes, any one looks back on his death-bed and sees all the temptations he has had, and perhaps given way to and offended God grievously, but has afterwards by His grace, come to have the Precious Blood of our Lord poured on his head by the hands of the priest, still he may say he hopes through the mercy of God for life everlasting; and this is the only consolation at the hour of death. Some persons are afraid of everlasting life, because they fear to be separated from their friends, but

you may be sure that those who are worthy of your love will be with you, and though you will be as it were wholly occupied with loving and adoring God, yet you will find pleasure in their society. You may be sure that all the joys of this world will be united in Heaven, and everything that can give the least pain or sorrow will be shut out. Think then on what I have said to you to-day, and always remember the last words you say in your Creed, which are *Life everlasting.*

APPENDIX

THE compilers have thought it would be well to give a few opinions referring to the three books concerning Father Dignam, his *Memoir*, *Retreats*, and *Conferences*, all three also containing letters and notes of spiritual direction. These quotations might easily be multiplied.

The † signifies that the writers were unacquainted with Father Dignam.

As many expressions of gratitude were also made in the letters, the compilers wish to point out that these thanks are chiefly due to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, without whose permission the works would never have appeared, and to whose careful revision they owe so much. And the compilers must also point out how deeply they have been indebted to the many generous souls who, doing violence to their own feelings, gave the valuable letters and notes which have so enriched these volumes, and rendered them as has been observed by many "alive and breathing."

The *Convents* in which these books are valued and admired are of various Orders. They are esteemed by Augustinians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Servites, in the Carmels of St. Teresa, by the daughters of St. Ursula, as well as by the Nuns of the Visitation, Good Shepherd, Notre Dame, Sisters of Charity, and of Mercy, the Holy Child, Marie Reparatrice, and many others; and these appreciations have come not only from all parts of our own country, but from far afield—Australia, America, India, Italy, France, Belgium, and Russia, so that he who led such a hidden life on earth, exercises after his death a wide apostolate in the spiritual life.

From Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

1. Father Dignam's name seems to me to be even more powerful now than in his life.

2. I prize Father Dignam's *Conferences* very much. Let us hope that the good Father's wise words may bear more and more abundant fruit.

3. As I have had the good fortune to make a Retreat under Father Dignam, I can vouch for the accuracy of some of the notes. The rest are, I am sure, just as faithful a reproduction of that good Father's thoughts. Altogether I am of opinion that the book will be a precious treasure for all who seek to know and to do God's will. It will explain many difficulties, and smooth the way to holiness, which is for all a way of the Cross, but which if Father Dignam's instructions are followed will be found to be the true way of peace and joy.

4. It is a very holy life. Many in Religion and out of it will derive benefit, profit, and edification from your pages.

5. I never knew his holiness till I read his *Memoir*.

6. I can say for your consolation that the books have done immense good among ourselves. I know this well.

6. Deeply imbued with spirituality.

From other priests.

† 1. His style is extraordinarily agreeable.

† 2. I am delighted with the books.

3. I cannot express sufficiently how warmly I admire it.

4. It will be of great use to souls.

† 5. Very beautiful life. Very beautiful life indeed! in the true sense of life. I think the book will do immense good.

From Nuns.

1. These books are to us simply delicious, and a never failing solace, as well as a firm support in times of spiritual faintness.

† 2. We have been all delighted with his *Memoir*—it reveals a devoted soul truly.

† 3. I have read with great interest and edification, the *Memoir* of Father Dignam.

4. The *Memoir* is perfect, and makes me long now for his *Retreats*. You will get many prayers on all sides.

† 5. The *Memoir* has been a source of great comfort. The Sisters are delighted.

6. His words and *his life* make an impression on me to last throughout life.

† 7. I have read with great pleasure and edification, the *Memoir* of Father Dignam.

† 8. I am greatly pleased with it.

† 9. We were so delighted with the *Memoir*, that we are quite impatient now to see the new book.

10. I am longing to read it. Father Purbrick was telling us about it when he was giving our Retreat.

† 11. I have heard so much of the *Memoir* I feel anxious to get it.

12. The books are real treasures.

13. We hope to enjoy *Retreats*, and benefit by them as much as by the *Memoir*.

14. May our Lord reward (the compilers) for the treasure given to his children, and to many others.

15. I am delighted with *Conferences*, so helpful for souls, the other volumes too one learns to value more and more. How grateful he must be for thus being enabled still to do good to so many. It is a great privilege to be admitted to see his inner life, and the struggle he had.

16. The books are such a comfort.

† 17. Lovely and practical (*Conferences*).

† 18. We are all charmed with the volume, and should like to express gratitude to (the compilers) for procuring us such a treasure.

19. How much the *Memoir* recalls of his own true spirit —his deep spirituality, his personal reverence for and love of our dear Lord. To read it is the next best thing to having a talk with him—his words cheer, strengthen, and comfort, and are like a ray of God's own sunlight.

† 20. A passage in *Bethlehem* made me think of Father Dignam—"Priests with hearts large as oceans, men that knew how to multiply their lives a hundred times for souls, the diversity of whose eloquent lineaments is controlled into unity by one pervading sovereign air of tenderness, as if they were the sisters of souls, rather than their rulers."

I think Father Dignam is perfect in the way he reads the heart, and puts his finger just on the place where becoming a saint hurts most. One particular letter did me so much good.

† 21. It will be most useful. His advice is so very clear and practical and simple and full of God.

I heard him preach once—a very beautiful sermon it was, in which he spoke of misunderstandings, and of the worst misunderstandings of all, the misunderstanding which sometimes arises between the Heart of Jesus and ourselves.

22. We are indeed delighted with the *Memoir*. It is all so simple and true to life, and so many beautiful letters; he was a master of the spiritual life.

23. It is simply exquisite. We read it with intense interest, and I am sure it will do much good. Our Lady will surely bless you for promoting the glory of her devoted child. He loved her so much.

From Persons in the World.

1. My interest in the book is intense, and I have no doubt it will prove to be all that the Preface hopes for it, and more besides (*Memoir*).

2. They are priceless treasures, they are so truly himself. I almost hear his voice and see his face as I read.

3. I appreciate *Conferences* immensely. All his children owe a debt of gratitude to the compilers.

4. I cannot tell you what an immense treasure and help dear Father Dignam's *Memoir* is to me.

5. The *Memoir* is a treasure, it will help to push me on.

† 6. All the Catholic world ought to be grateful to you for bringing out these *Memoirs*. I have been revelling in them.

7. We who have had the privilege of hearing and reading Father Dignam's words specially addressed to us, must feel joy at the thought that these volumes will extend the influence he always used for the glory of God, to those who knew him not, during life.

CONFERENCES

GIVEN BY FATHER DIGNAM OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

With Retreats, Sermons, and Notes of Spiritual Direction.

WITH A PREFACE BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MAZZELLA, S.J.

Reviews of the First Edition.

"This book has been a source of pleasure and comfort to us, and we feel a debt of gratitude to the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, who have given it to the public. . . . The transparent simplicity, the common sense piety, the earnestness of purpose, which made him employ with advantage even trivial matters, are evident in every sentence of the book. . . . It is in a very true sense a 'human document.' . . . Each sentence is a manifestation of the writer's self. Those who are accustomed to associate with the words 'human document' some tit-bits of coarseness written to rouse the jaded appetite of the public, will be disappointed in these 'Conferences,' for there is here no attractive analysis of physical passion. Should the public seek to know the aspiration, the underlying modes of a nineteenth century Jesuit, here they may be found plainly written in every lecture throughout the book. . . . The cloistered nun or Belgravia dame are taught the same lesson, nor does Father Dignam mince matters. Take, for instance, his lecture on 'The Valiant Woman.' . . . It is not a volume to be run through and read here and there by reference to the index. In it you have a train of thought which guided a life. The lectures and sermons are the result of meditations made many times over. From these Conferences the reader will learn to appreciate the Promoter of the Apostleship of Prayer, and will say that England is not poorer when such writers have lived in our day."—*Monitor.*

"'The Poor Servants of the Mother of God' have shown their regard for Father Dignam's memory by publishing, under the title of *Conferences* (Burns and Oates, 6s.), a selection of his discourses and letters. . . . These rough notes afford a setting, which well befit the homeliness, simplicity, and vigour which mark his style."—*Catholic Book Notes.*

"So many books of this sort are published that the general reader is inclined to dismiss them with a hasty glance. If he

takes up this book, it will hold him in spite of himself. . . . The book is literally the voice of a soul speaking to a soul. The soul that speaks, too, is one of rare distinction—the charity of God breathes through it. . . . 'Of the making of books there is no end.' Would there were many more like this."—*Freeman's Journal.*

"This is the third volume which has been published to perpetuate the memory of Father Dignam, S.J. It is impossible to open this book without finding some gem of advice or direction."—*Catholic Watchman*, Madras.

"The book covers a great deal of ground, and in concise fashion treats of many truths of the spiritual life. But its great charm is that we get the old truths searchingly applied to us through the medium of an original and lovable personality. Moreover, the method in which the book has been compiled gives us not so much the written words as the spoken, with the natural vividness that the spoken word alone can give."—*Dublin Review.*

"In reading them one is struck again and again by Father Dignam's knowledge of human nature and his wonderful prudence as a director of souls. Page after page is replete with lessons which will prove profitable to all who read them, and will be in the highest degree beneficial to nuns and religious confraternities."—*Catholic Times.*

"To our minds this third volume of Father Dignam's, if we may so style it, consists, as his Eminence expressed it, of spiritual gems of special lustre, and spiritual flowers of peculiar attractiveness, contains very much that is not to be found in its predecessors, and that we are grateful to have saved for us from destruction. . . . The world is wise in its own generation, and 'the children of the kingdom' need the guidance of another and higher wisdom to defeat its wiles. The work of a director does not die with him. In more senses than one it lives, and with abiding influence extends even to further generations. It is hidden and silent in its operation, like most of God's greatest works. Hence it is no meaningless phrase that we use when we say that a great and lasting debt of gratitude is owing to Father Dignam's spiritual children for having preserved for us part of those treasures of which they had the best share during his lifetime."—*Tablet.*

MEMOIR OF FATHER DIGNAM, S.J.

Revised and with Preface by

FATHER EDWARD IGNATIUS PURBRICK, S.J.

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"Very recently we had the pleasure of noticing the Life of Father Dignam. The same loving hands to whom we owe his memoirs have completed their task by the publication of what has been preserved of the notes of his Retreats and a number of letters not given in the former volume. The exquisite practical wisdom of Father Dignam in matters of spiritual direction was often a subject of wonder to those who had the good fortune to experience it. . . . Father Dignam was certainly of the number of those who have adapted themselves to widely different types of spiritual children. His gift was to make himself a servant to the diverging dispositions of many, seeing that some find a congenial element if their Director is somewhat stern, while others, and these the greater number, can be led on to great heights only by being tenderly dealt with.

Nowhere did Father Dignam's innate firmness show itself to more advantage than in making short work of certain shallow maxims of pseudo devotion. A novice wrote to him that she had somewhere seen it said: 'Unless a Religious became a vessel of gold in his noviceship, he would never become one.' And also, 'that a Religious is in his after years what he has made himself in his noviceship.' The Father replied: 'If this is an axiom, it is one of a school which I do not admire, and I regard it as neither solid nor wholesome. As for vessels of gold, they don't exist. . . . Life is a string of conversions. . . . I should not like any strained efforts on purpose to attain something definite before the novitiate was over, but only a sort of glad wondering humble gratitude at the greatness and goodness of your vocation, and deep horror of a tepid self-seeking life.' The evil leaven left behind them by the Jansenists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in their ascetic works, can only be purged out by a thorough return to the wide, generous, kindly asceticism of the Fathers of the Church. This is peculiarly conspicuous in the warping and cramping of the natural affections, in the idle pursuit of a fancied sanctity, which is in reality a stolid semi-pagan stoicism. Very wisely did Father Dignam write: 'It is not good to check the inclination to be very sympathetic; some trying to do that with the idea of being detached and mortified, went so far as to lose their power of sympathizing altogether, and yet our Lord's Heart was the most sympathetic that ever beat.' . . . Such was in very truth the secret element of Father Dignam's mission. He was an enticer of hearts. In his own words: 'You don't understand what a priest's heart is,' he betrayed the secret."—*Tablet.*

"Among the wise sayings recorded in the Ethics of Aristotle is one that warns us that we are to call no man happy until he is dead. Various interpretations are given to this saying, and among them is one that we may well apply to the author of Retreats and Conferences contained in the volume before us. For the true character and worth of a man can generally be far better estimated after his death than it can be while he is still alive. Sometimes he is not a little over-estimated during life, and qualities that have raised him high in the esteem of others turn out after his death to be the effects of his natural character with which he was born rather than to supernatural

grace, and to his own self-denying efforts to conquer his faults and live a life of virtue and perfection. And, on the other hand, there are men, and thank God not a few men, who were regarded by those among whom they lived, and whose judgment of them was rather a superficial one, as men good indeed, but nothing very remarkable in the way of virtue, but who nevertheless are discovered, after their death, to have attained to a degree of supernatural virtue and holiness that their contemporaries little suspected. The world in general, and sometimes their own family or Order, esteemed and respected them, but did not pierce beneath the surface or gauge the depth of holiness which characterized their hidden lives. They wondered why it was that the souls they directed clung to them so closely, and esteemed their counsels as almost inspired. Now we do not hesitate to include Father Dignam in this latter class. He had such a power of self-effacement, and of hiding his life of self-sacrifice from the eyes of men, that the remarkable holiness that God had vouchsafed him was but partially appreciated. But since his death his true character has been more fully recognized. His Memoir brings out the wonderful unselfishness of his life, and that gift which is impossible without personal holiness, the gift of leading on others to a high degree of sanctity. What his Memoir has disclosed to all who have read it, appears with equal clearness in his Retreats and Conferences. They are essentially the work of a man who has himself led the life he recommends to others. They are simple, unpretending, with no attempt at rhetoric, but yet they come home to the heart with an incisive force which shows that they come straight from the heart of him who uttered them. They are, moreover, most ingenious and original in the lessons they deduce from the various scenes in the life of our Lord with which they deal, and put the most familiar truths in a striking and interesting way which could not fail to attract those who listened to them. Another feature of these Retreats is their wonderful variety. Father Dignam must have had great fertility of mind, for though he deals with the same topic over and over again he never repeats himself."—*The Month.*

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